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ARMENIAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA



AMAA

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Cover Photo: Sunday Morning Worship Service at the Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel Church in Aleppo, Syria (photo credit: Studio Venus)

Impactful

But God will never forget the needy; the hope of the afflicted will never perish.
Psalm 9:18

By **Zaven Khanjian**, AMAA Executive Director/CEO

Imitating the game show 'Jeopardy,' I am in search of a question that would best conform to the above answer. They might not be scarce.

The above 'answer' constantly roamed in my mind as I swept through the countries I visited in May and June. Syria and Lebanon; which have constituted the historic lion's share of AMAA's global mission and ministry field and Armenia and Artsakh; which prize the current lion's share.

The 'answer' always employed my mental vision even long before I have come to think about the question.

At every step of my trip, with every interaction I had, I have seen the impact AMAA has on the lives of people all over. One life at a time.

From the depth of the eyes of the faithful to the gleeful eyes of achievers. From the gazing eyes of the dreamers to the misty eyes of the hopeful, I have seen the fulfilment of the above 'answer.'

Some of you followed my mission trip on AMAA's Facebook page. Others may follow the trip in this issue of the AMAA News. This has not been an unusual trip for the AMAA Executive Director who visits the mission field on a regular basis. What was unusual this year were the circumstances on the ground in all these geographical areas.

- The heartbreaking loss of vast territories in the Artsakh war of 2020.
- A national mourning for the loss of thousands of Armenia's youngest and brightest in the war.
- The overnight conversion of a middle class in Lebanon to poverty and despair.
- Hardly overcoming a ten-year war, a community suffering from super inflation caused by sanctions in Syria.
- The assault of a global virus shutting down an unprepared world.

What an unprecedented year due to the multiple layers of crises experienced in all these countries, including in our own backyard, the USA.

"In the world you will have tribulations. But take heart, I have overcome the world." John 16:33

Upon my return from a four-week emotionally packed trip, I was asked to summarize what I took with me and what I brought back. It did not take me long to pack the answers in two simple but lauded words.

I carried **HOPE** and brought back **INSPIRATION**.

Carrying HOPE has always been the AMAA's core mission. HOPE has been the most treasured resource AMAA has spread, distributed and disseminated. In HOPE, the Good News of the Gospel taken to the ends of the world is bundled. HOPE is the remedy to despair and depression, the eye drop to a blurred vision and the magical key to revival, rejuvenation and resuscitation.

HOPE is a LIFELINE. Lifeline to Success, Happiness, Independence, Life and Salvation.

AMAA has the Great Commission inscribed on its official letterhead where it says, "Go into the world and preach the Gospel to all creation." The Gospel is the Good News. The Good News that "God will never forget the needy; the hope of the afflicted will never perish." AMAA carries Hope wherever it goes, and HOPE lays the foundation of Success, leads to Happiness, achieves Independence, embraces Life and anchors Hope in Salvation.

How would you describe AMAA's mission around the globe?

IMPACTFUL!

Impactful is the answer I have seen, touched and felt all across my mission trip.

Our collective reward is in our realization that the mission is **IMPACTFUL**.

Thank you for being part of the mission.



July 26, 2021

With the Motherland Next to the Motherland

By Hranush Hakobyan*

We live in a difficult period of modern Armenian history. Our most important treasure – the security and territorial integrity of the Publishing of Armenia – is endangered. Our Homeland is shrinking. We have lost much of Artsakh. We have sacrificed the blossoming youth of the country.

For the past 30 years, during both happy and sad times, the Armenian Diaspora always stood by the Homeland, celebrating victories or reaping the bitter fruits of defeat, supporting Armenia with its structures and organizations, and its benefactors and talented people. One of these organizations is the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA).

Soon after the independence of the Republic of Armenia, this charitable organization established its branch in Armenia and has carried out its humanitarian mission with complete devotion.

Congratulations on the AMAA's 30th Anniversary in the Homeland!

Some of the descendants of the Armenian people, who survived the Armenian Genocide, settled in faraway America where Armenian Evangelical Churches founded the AMAA, sowing such healthy seeds, which matured, became strong and bore fruits. In addition to its diligent activities, the Association engaged in the preservation and strengthening of the Armenian national identity, charity and the spread and development of Armenian culture.

The AMAA was active after the 1988 earthquake, when the Association provided assistance to the disaster regions with food, clothing, medicine and medical equipment.

For 103 years, the Association has not only been operating and implementing charitable programs, but also spreading its branches in different parts of the world and fulfilling its commitment to Armenian communities.

After 30 years, we can state that in the multi-layered fabric of the Diaspora and Homeland, strong ties were created, structures were developed and our compa-

triot's trust in the Homeland increased, as evidenced by their charitable initiatives and the growth of investments in Armenia and Artsakh. Although we cannot attribute all these changes to the years 2018-2021, when many established structures were destroyed, and mutual relations were unjustly severed, there were organizations that continued their activities at the cost of great efforts. Among them is the AMAA Headquarters in Armenia.

Today, there are dozens of AMAA offices in different regions of Armenia and Artsakh supporting and caring for the material and spiritual needs of the Armenian people. Its mission is to contribute to the well-being of the people of Armenia, and to help improve the lives of its citizens by providing financial and medical assistance to the needy, providing educational and cultural services, providing assistance to the unemployed, and paying special attention to the children.

It should be noted that AMAA Armenia also secures employment for the unemployed providing jobs for about 480 people in the face of such high unemployment and poverty rates. Through its lawful work, AMAA Armenia contributes to the improvement of people's lives in about 40 regions in Armenia and Artsakh, by implementing various programs. AMAA's efforts to create jobs in various fields are commendable. Thanks to the Association, soon after the earthquake 15 home-made carpet workshops were set up in Gyumri. And in the village of Mayakovsky, Kotayk region, a livestock farm was set up and the income from the products alleviated the material needs of families and solved some of their financial problems. In addition, the AMAA provides medical care and services to the needy. After the earthquake, a free charitable medical center was established in Spitak in cooperation with the Union of Armenian Doctors of France and another one in Vanadzor with a children's center on the same grounds.

One of their key areas of activity is helping young girls and women with their education and cultural development. The Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School

and Community Center in Yerevan, with its exemplary teaching staff and planned activities of the School's administration, is proof of that goal. Textbook printing and the provision of free books are significant contributions to education. Systematic support is provided to kindergartens, orphanages, nursing homes and schools, where in addition to the financial assistance, renovation and improvement works are carried out. Currently the AMAA in Armenia and Artsakh finances and operates four kindergartens. Free courses in English, French and computer skills were also held for different levels at the AMAA Yerevan Center and at regional offices.

The financial support provided by the AMAA to needy families is very important. They stand by the sick and helpless, children and elderly, Syrian-Armenians, those affected by the earthquake, and the deprived and needy, and it helps alleviate worries of socially incapacitated large families. This is demonstrated by the activities of charitable soup kitchens which mitigate the issues of a cold winter for those caught in the clutches of poverty.

The AMAA, through its Armenia branch, provides assistance to the Armenian Army and to our soldiers, which is needed more today than ever. All their initiatives are characterized by people-centeredness, quality service, efficiency and commitment to work and ideas.

Due to my work as RA Minister of Social Security, Chairman of the National Assembly Committee and RA Minister of Diaspora, I have always cooperated with the AMAA and its office in Yerevan. We have implemented many programs together. I have especially singled out the fact that the people who work there, the presidents of the Association throughout the years and the ministers, who are national, patriotic figures, are honest, principled, never give up on their promises, carry out projects, have high moral qualities, and carry national values. They are pleasant to work with and are effective.

(Continued on the following page →)

Հայրենանվեր Ծառայության 30 Տարի

Եզնիկ արքեպիսկոպոս Պետրոսյան*



Ամերիկայի Հայ Ավետարանական ընկերակցության (ԱՀԱԸ) հետ իմ հարաբերությունը մոտիկից սկսվեց, երբ 2000 թ. Նշանակվեցի Հայաստանի Աստվածաշնչային ընկերության հոգաբարձուների խորհրդի նախագահ, իսկ փոխնախագահն էր ԱՀԱԸ Հայաստանի ներկայացուցիչ, Հայ Ավետարանական եկեղեցու ավագ հոգևոր հովիվ վեր. դոկտ. Ռընե Լևոնյանը:

Հայ Ավետարանական եկեղեցու եւ ԱՀԱԸ գործադիր տնօրեն վեր. դոկտ. Մովսես Ճանապազյանի անմիջական նախաձեռնությամբ ՀԱԸ-ն 1998 թվից ձեռնամուխ եղավ «Արարատ» (Շուշի) Աստվածաշնչի 1896 թ. հրատարակությունը արդի հայերեն դարձնելու աշխատանքին: Դրանում, որպես գլխավոր մասնագետ, ընդգրկված էր Աստվածաշնչային միացյալ ընկերությունների ռեգիոնալ բարգմանության կոորդինատոր վեր. դոկտ. Մանուել Ջինբաշյանը, իսկ բարգմանական խմբում՝ Երևանի Հայ Ավետարանական Մկրտական քրիստոնյաների եկեղեցու հոգևոր հովիվ վեր. Յուրա Ավանեսյանը: 2003-ին լույս տեսավ Նոր Կտակարանը, իսկ Աստվածաշունչն ամբողջությամբ հրատարակվեց 2010 թ.:

Աստվածաշնչի հրատարակության աշխատանքները համակարգում էին ՀԱԸ գլխավոր քարտուղար Հրաչ ավագ սրկ. Սարգսյանը, ՀԱԸ խորհրդի նախագահ Եզնիկ արք. Պետրոսյանը և ԱՀԱԸ Հայաստանի ներկայացուցիչ, Հայ Ավետարանական եկեղեցու ավագ հոգևոր հովիվ վեր. դոկտ. Ռընե Լևոնյանը:

ՀԱԸ և ԱՀԱԸ համագործակցությունը ավելի ծավալուն դարձավ վերջին տասնամյակում, հատկապես ՀԱԸ «Ամառային Էկումենիկ ճամբար», «Աստվածաշնչի գիտելիքների վիկտորինա» ծրագրերի շրջանակներում, մանկական զանազան այլ ծրագրերում: Մեզ համար շատ հաճելի է աշխատել ԱՀԱԸ հայաստանյան մասնաճյուղի տնօրեն պրն. Հարութ Ներսեսյանի հետ:

Վերոնշյալ և այլ ծրագրերի համատեղ իրականացումը, որոնք շարունակվում են մինչ օրս, հնարավորություն է տալիս մոտիկից ծանոթանալ ԱՀԱԸ բազմաբնույթ գործունեությանը Հայաստանում և Արցախում:

ԱՀԱԸ հայրենանվեր ծառայություններն ընդգրկում են հասարակական կյանքի տարբեր ոլորտներ՝ կրթություն, առողջապահություն, գյուղատնտեսություն, հովանավորություն, բարեգործական և քրիստոնեական դաստիարակության, հրատարակչական և զարգացման, ծրագրեր ... Մեծ է Ընկերակցության դերը հայապահպանության գործում: Ներկայացված լինելով աշխարհի 24 երկրներում՝ այն նպաստում է աշխարհասփյուռ մեր հայրենակիցների կրթության, քրիստոնեական դաստիարակության և մշակութային կյանքի կազմակերպմանը:

ԱՀԱԸ 100-ամյակի (1918-2018 թթ) առիթով Ամենայն Հայոց Կաթողիկոս Գարեգին Բ-ն իր շնորհավորական ուղերձում նշել է. «...Գնահատելի է Ամերիկայի Հայ Ավետարանական Ընկերակցության և աշխարհի տարբեր երկրներում գործող նրա մասնաճյուղերի գործունեությունը, որը ներդաշնակ է համազգային մեր իղձերին ու նպատակներին և միաժամանակ նշանակալի նպաստ է մեր երկրի զորացման ու մեր ժողովրդի բարօրության կերտման գործին: Մեր մաղթանքն է, որ Ամերիկայի Հայ Ավետարանական Ընկերակցությունը Նոր արդյունքներով և ձեռքբերումներով շարունակի համալրել բարեսիրական իր ծառայությունները»:

Վեհափառ Հայրապետի այս գնահատանքը ԱՀԱԸ բեղմնավոր աշխատանքի վկայությունն է:

Շնորհավորում եմ ԱՀԱԸ 30-ամյա գործունեությունը Հայաստանում և մաղթում մեծագույն հաջողություններ և նորանոր ձեռքբերումներ:

*Եզնիկ արքեպիսկոպոս Պետրոսյան Հայաստանի Աստվածաշնչային ընկերության Գլխավոր Քարտուղարն է

I cordially congratulate the leadership of the AMAA, all the ministers, the leaders, members, partners, and supporters of the Association for their 30 years of uninterrupted service in Armenia and wish them success in helping to lift our country out of deep crisis and end the war.

We can achieve positive results only with a unified and well balanced people, and with experienced, smart, balanced leaders who have a say, who know how to organize, coordinate, ensure the security of the population, serve and manage, who can make resolute decisions. Those who have taken the responsibility and can fulfill the commitment

with honor. They have served in the army, gone through the war, know how to represent our national interest in the outside world with dignity, negotiate with strategic partners and force international bodies to sit with them and take their issues into account.

So, the time has come for all Armenian and Pan-Armenian structures to unite around healthy national forces and register victories. We have no right to despair, we must believe in ourselves, in our powerful collective strength, power of our thoughts, will and arms, believe in the Armenian genius, build our future security with the unity, organization, love, hope and faith in

our Homeland, Artsakh and Diaspora, for a secure and powerful Armenia, the Armenia of our dreams. □

(Translated from Eastern Armenian by Louisa Janbazian)



*** Hranush Hakobyan** is the Founding RA Minister of Diaspora, RA Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Doctor of Law, and Professor.

AMAA In Armenia 30 Years of Service

By Nazareth E. Darakjian, M.D.*

It took a massive earthquake to open the gates of Armenia to the world. The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) had been up and running since 1918, but the iron curtain had restricted its activities to the Armenian communities in the Diaspora. The earthquake hit in December of 1988; those were the final days of the Soviet Union and the iron curtain had begun to crumble. That was also the beginning of my involvement with the AMAA. I remember the first Board meeting that I attended in 1990, almost the entire discussion was about Armenia. It was an exciting time in the sense that the AMAA could finally channel some of its energy and resources to the Motherland where the need was greatest. Armenia became an independent country in 1991 and that year also marks the official beginning of AMAA's services and activities in Armenia.

The earthquake, independence, the first Artsakh war, the economic blockade and energy crisis quickly followed each other. Each one of these events brought its share of problems that made life more difficult for the citizens of Armenia. Most heartbreaking was the condition of orphans who had lost one or both parents to the earthquake or the war and the children from very poor families who could not make ends meet.

The Executive Director of the AMAA at that time was Rev. Dr. Movses Janbazian, a man of vision and boundless energy. He was able to galvanize the AMAA Board and large groups of volunteers who participated in the formation of the Armenia Orphan and Child Care Committees in Southern California, New Jersey and the Boston area. The function of these committees was to find donors who would sponsor a child by donating a set amount of money every year that would be transferred to the family of that child. These committees worked day and night and became an inspiration to many generous sponsors, thus raising millions of dollars that helped those needy children and their families.

The bulk of the AMAA's annual budget in Armenia – and the rest of the world for that matter – is spent on children. In addition to the humanitarian aid that the AMAA provides, there is a great emphasis on education. The Avedisian School serves more than 600 students in the southwest district of Yerevan. Most of the School's graduates go on to college and University. The Hankavan Sheen-Shoghig Camp serves thousands of children and youth every summer providing physical as well as spiritual nourishment. Many children will hear about Christ for the first time during the week they spend in Camp. Most of the Camp's buildings have been refurbished to make them usable, the last major project being the large dining room. The Bedrosian Camp in Shushi did serve the children of Artsakh for many years. Unfortunately, we have no access to the Camp at present as it has been in Azeri hands since the war of 2020.

Our after school day centers serve a very important function for children who come from families with social and psychological problems. This is a place where children can get a warm meal for lunch and then do homework under supervision followed by arts, crafts or sports. We have six such centers at present, four in Armenia and two in Artsakh.

Another invaluable service to Armenian families with newborn babies has been the provision of infant milk formula to help nourish these infants until they reach their first birthday. This unique project is ongoing and enjoys the support of a wide spectrum of donors in the Armenian communities of the Diaspora.

Building churches has been one of the priorities of the AMAA in Armenia with the first new construction taking place in Stepanavan in northern Armenia in 1998. This was followed by construction in Vanadzor and Gyumri. The Evangelical Church of Armenia offers Sunday services and other church related activities in many other buildings which have been acquired and remodeled as necessary all over Armenia and Artsakh.

The AMAA was planning to celebrate its 25 years of service in Artsakh with a

group tour in September 2020. The tour was of course cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Tragically, September 2020 saw the start of the second Artsakh war that brought devastation to the region, with the loss of thousands of precious lives as well as large swaths of land including our beloved city of Shushi. When peace was restored to the area, the AMAA was the first NGO to resume humanitarian aid to the people there, kindergartens were reopened, and many damaged houses repaired.

The AMAA has served Armenia for 30 years, helping the poor, educating the young and providing spiritual nourishment to those who are hungry. More than half of AMAA's annual budget goes to Armenia and Artsakh and there is no question that the AMAA has improved the lives of many and has made a positive impact on the people there. These are challenging times for the people of Armenia and Artsakh. But, despite all these challenges, we should be able to encourage the people to stay on their land and even encourage those who are facing greater challenges in Syria and Lebanon to move to their historic Fatherland.

More than 17 centuries have passed since the day that Armenia accepted Christianity as the national religion, thus becoming the first nation in the world to do so, with the Roman Empire following them a decade later. Throughout the centuries Armenia has maintained the faith and paid for it with the blood of millions of martyrs. In that dark corner of the world, Armenia should serve as a beacon of light spreading the Good News of the Gospel to those who would have not heard otherwise. With God's grace, the AMAA will be there for many more years to help keep that light burning. □



*** Dr. Nazareth Darakjian**
is the President of
AMAA Board.



AMAA

The Early Years in Armenia

AMAA and AEWC delegation meet with His Holiness Vazken I, in Etchmiadzin, April 1989. L to R: Rev. Karl Avakian, Robert Hekemian, Rev. Daniel Sahagian, Catholicos Vazken I and Rev. Dr. Movses B. Janbazian.

By Rev. René Léonian, Ph.D.*

The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) has played and continues to play an important role in Armenia since the 1988 devastating earthquake in the Homeland. I first met Rev. Dr. Movses Janbazian in May 1988, during the Annual Synod of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches of France in Valence. Our paths never departed until his death on September 25, 2000. He was, along with others, an instrument of God which guided me in a pastoral and missionary ministry in Europe, Armenia and in the countries of the former USSR.

As Executive Director of the AMAA, Rev. Janbazian saw the vision of the Armenian Evangelical Churches globally. He was the providential man to orchestrate humanitarian and spiritual relief in Armenia, especially after the earthquake of December 7, 1988. His work remained unfinished. But God is faithful as others took over his unfinished work. The personality of Rev. Janbazian has influenced many people and its impact has spilled far beyond the Armenian Evangelical Churches.

Thus, as soon as the earthquake took place in Armenia, Rev. Janbazian and I were in constant telephone contact to analyze the situation and decide on the actions to

be taken. Three weeks after the earthquake, my wife Sylvie and I went to Armenia for 15 days to accompany a cargo plane departing from Paris. As soon as we arrived in Yerevan, we participated in the distribution of humanitarian aid in the northern areas of Armenia which were affected by this deadly disaster. Prior to our departure for Armenia, Rev. Janbazian asked me to make a detailed report of our mission in Armenia – including the general situation, the needs as well as my various meetings with members of the government, His Holiness Vasken I, Catholicos of All Armenians, officials of Armenian Evangelical churches, intellectuals, the affected population and others. As soon as I returned to Paris, I sent my report to Rev. Janbazian. It was the first field report that AMAA released to all its members and supporters.

In April 1989, a delegation from AMAA and the Armenian Evangelical World Council (AEWC) including Revs. Karl Avakian, Movses Janbazian, Daniel Sahagian and Mr. Robert Hekemian visited Armenia. In May 1989, the Association "Hope for Armenia" (Espoir pour l'Arménie) was created by the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches of France. I had the privilege of being its first President until 1993.

A collaboration was quickly established between the AMAA and "Hope for Armenia." Both groups had the same vision – to help our people in Armenia materially, psychologically and spiritually.

Since 1989, we have pooled all our financial and human resources to be as effective as possible to relieve Armenia and its population from this terrible distress. Of course, AMAA's financial resources were greater. But the proximity of France to reach Armenia allowed a great mobilization of the members of "Hope for Armenia." Our two associations were complementing to meet the urgent needs of the disaster areas. For years, the AMAA and "Hope for Armenia" have welcomed volunteers to Armenia from North America, France, the Middle East, Europe, South America and Australia.

We must pay tribute to the members of the AMAA Board, to all its presidents, Executive Directors, staff members, as well as to its volunteers in the US and elsewhere.

From the day after the earthquake followed by the official establishment of AMAA in Armenia in 1991 and for many years, the programs implemented by AMAA in Armenia and Artsakh helped alleviate the misery of children and their

families. Until the early 2000s, most of AMAA's ministry and outreach programs were implemented in around 50 towns and villages. These include:

- Help to orphanages and Elderly homes
- Help to schools (nursery, primary, high school)
- Reconstruction of Rev. Dikran Andreasian School in Gyumri and Rev. Daniel Sahagian School in Spitak
- Christian education programs and support to churches
- Establishment of Summer Camps and DVBS's in all regions of Armenia and Artsakh
- Sending two Mobile Medical Clinics from the United States
- Establishment of medical centers in Yerevan, Vanadzor and Spitak
- Establishment of the Avedisian School in Yerevan
- Printing books for students in Artsakh schools
- Printing and distribution of Christian literature for schools
- Publishing magazines: Evangelical Church of Armenia (for youth and adults) and Shoghig (for children and teenagers)
- Printing and distribution of Bibles and New Testaments
- Cultural programs: children's choirs, adult choirs, little virtuosos (musicians), theater
- Sports programs: football teams (soccer)
- Development programs: crafts, agriculture, animal breeding, etc.
- Ecumenical programs: collaboration

between the three Armenian churches (Apostolic, Catholic and Evangelical) and in four organizations: Bible Society of Armenia, Armenia Ecumenical Round Table, Jinishian Memorial Foundation, Eclof/Ecumenical Loan Program

- Establishing the Evangelical Theological Academy of Armenia
- Establishing a permanent Office in Artsakh

Since 1989 the AMAA has supported the people of Artsakh and established its permanent Office in Stepanakert in 1995 being the first Armenian Diaspora organization to be officially registered in Artsakh in 1995. AMAA's mission and service in Artsakh are many and varied.

I had the privilege of being the Representative of AMAA and AEW in Armenia and Artsakh serving from 1994 to 2011. For 17 years, with our staff members and church leaders, we tried to be faithful to the main objectives of the AMAA, namely its support to the churches, Christian Education programs, humanitarian, medical, educational, cultural and development aid programs. It is in a Christian spirit and in the name of love of neighbor that we have established this beautiful work. May God alone be glorified!



Class of 2000 - Evangelical Theological Academy of Armenia.

Today, Armenia and Artsakh need us all more than ever. Let us continue to pray, to give, to serve and to dedicate ourselves to the cause of the weakest and the most in need. May God renew the strength of all our colleagues in the field. May God grant His wisdom and discernment to those in charge of the AMAA in the United States under the leadership of Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian. □



*** Rev. Dr. René Léonian** is the AMAA Representative in Eurasia. He was the AMAA Representative in Armenia and Artsakh 1994-2011.



Joe Stein, AMAA supporter, enjoys dancing with children at AMAA's Camp in Aghveran, Armenia - July 2016.



Rev. Karl Avakian, Pastor of the Armenian Presbyterian Church (APC) of Paramus, NJ, and Rev. Dr. Movses B. Janbazian, AMAA Executive Director, dedicate one of the mobile clinics on the grounds of APC before shipping it to Armenia - mid-1990s.



AMAA's Health Care Center in Yerevan.

From the Cradle... 30 Years of Humanitarian Action

By Rev. Ara Guekguezian*

The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), celebrating 30 years of serving, partnering with and encouraging this Republic of Armenia, has included an enormous commitment of resources to meet basic human needs.

Rather than provide an exhaustive list of resources, I will share stories beginning with my first trip to Armenia in 2003. I was looking for the best match for a sister church relationship with the congregation I was serving, Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church in Fresno, CA. While touring the Evangelical Church of Armenia in Gyumri, I was shown the storage rooms in the basement of the property purchased and maintained by the AMAA, by the staff hired and compensated by the AMAA. With great pride, I was shown rooms full of diapers, infant formula, warm clothing, both new and used, cooking oil, pasta, cans of tomatoes and other non-perishable food items.

Later, in conversation with AMAA Armenia leadership past and present, I heard stories of the deprivations of the early 1990s. The AMAA had already been providing the basics for maintaining life for 12 years. Each moment when a need was met, a new need became apparent. Gathering the children of a village, town or city at a church site for a week of Vacation Bible School, resourced and staffed by local Christians and Christians from around the world, leads to addressing the need for

primary education that included Christian nurture and a hot meal or two each day.

So, in addition to infant formula, kitchen staples and warm clothing, *mangabardezs* (kindergartens/preschools) were established. Children from ages 3 to 6 received a strong foundation in mind, body and spirit before they entered formal education.

By the end of the first trip to Armenia, we were led to a committed relationship between Pilgrim and the Evangelical Church of Gyumri. For years, we added support for a *mangabardez* connected to the church.

As *mangabardezs* and congregations flourished, the need for quality education became apparent. A great school was founded and resourced in Yerevan – the Avedisian School that has grown into a premier K through 12 institution. Another great vehicle for enhancing and fortifying the life of the child was the establishment of Shogh Centers in Vanadzor, Gyumri and Yerevan, with one in Stepanavan planned for fall of 2021. These Centers address the mind, body and spirit of 30-70 children in a holistic after-school program (full day in the summer). The children, who come from deprived situations or who have a history of trauma, gather for dance, art, additional vocabulary, reading and math work, and therapy. It is a sophisticated response to complex human need and several steps removed from basic humanitarian assistance.

The next step is to provide opportunities for the parents and grandparents of these

children to participate in life skills classes, some offered online as well. There is even the desire of graduates of the Shogh program for continuing education.

The AMAA has also provided health care in permanent clinics and through medical mission trips in communities with limited access to health care.

The story may continue on about the various traumas and deprivations experienced in a land devastated by an earthquake in 1988 followed by a political upheaval in 1991. But the greater story is about a strong and resilient people: a people of faith that see opportunity to live into what they believe.

Over the years the AMAA has provided a plethora of humanitarian assistance. The constant has been that we are serving our Lord, as we serve our people, AND what we offer is the best, high quality, top tier. Our partners, our sisters and brothers in Christ, do not receive our seconds, but the very best of what we offer to God from God's abundant blessing to us.

Collectively, as the AMAA, we are able to provide the best that is available.

Finally, the greatest humanitarian aid the AMAA provides is that what each of us gives of ourselves in treasure, talent and time. I am more fully human, more fully who created me to be, through offering my two nickels, my two weeks each year, and my passable Armenian conversational skills through the AMAA.

I look forward with great anticipation to what the next steps we will take in addressing the needs of God's people, our sisters and brothers in Armenia, over the next 30 years. □



AMAA's Infant Formula Program.



AMAA's Soup Kitchen Program in Stepanavan.



* **Rev. Ara Guekguezian** is a former AMAA Board member and Co-Chair of Armenia Committee.

AMAA Armenia

The Footprints of a 30-Year Journey



He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of his people.

Psalm 113: 7-8

By Harout Nercessian*

1. The Journey

In 1991, the Armenian Missionary Association of America embarked on a faith journey of Christian outreach in the newly independent Fatherland. Armenia was trying to establish its independence while recovering from the devastating earthquake, surviving an economic collapse, and waging war for the independence of Karabagh. Those were the "dark years," when bread, fuel, electricity and most other life necessities were scarcities.

None of the AMAA visionaries at that time could predict where this journey would lead. There were no road signs. No maps. Actually, no road to follow whatsoever and no preceding pioneers. The weather was damp and foggy with very poor visibility. This was a faith journey where you plan as you go along. AMAA was trailblazing and leaving fresh footprints on the landscape.

The immediate concern was to alleviate the socio-economic pain gripping the nation.

God led this organization to realize His purposes to heal the sick, feed the hungry, and, most important of all, to give the hopeless the courage to dream of a bright future. AMAA's 30-year journey can best be seen in the lives impacted by its caring service, fueled by Christian love.

Susan (not her real name) was a shy and understandably friendless little girl who lived with her mother and infant brother. Her mother earned a below-poverty income by cleaning streets and collecting residential garbage. They lived in a multi-purpose, non-sanitary room provided by the waste management company, which employed the mother. The multi-purpose room served as bedroom, kitchen, dining room, bathroom and more... Susan grew up fatherless.

Susan did not enjoy a happy childhood, yet her enrollment in one of AMAA's programs changed all that. Our professional staff worked with her for many years. Today,

Susan is a happily employed, attractive, young woman. With help from the AMAA, she moved her family into a clean apartment. Her mother no longer needs to work.

During its 30-year existence, AMAA Armenia has strived to fulfill God's mission on earth, best illustrated in Psalm 113, "He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of his people."

As AMAA Executive Director/CEO, Zaven Khanjian often says, "AMAA invests in people," especially children.

2. The Legacy

The Footprints

I frequently visit our mission centers in Armenia and Artsakh. My trips never fail to remind me of the tens of thousands of people who over the last 30 years have been touched by God through the AMAA.

Despite the bad hand dealt to them by life, these people, who populate the footprints left behind by AMAA's 3-decade journey, have beaten the odds to grow into productive citizens living fulfilling lives.

The Apostle Paul illustrates the impact of his work among the Corinthian Christians with the metaphor of a letter "written on our hearts, known and read by everyone." Paul's legacy, the footprints of his labor, was the transformed lives of these Christians. We certainly share the Apostle's sentiments.

Material Aid

We provide much needed material assistance such as financial aid, infant formula, warm clothing, and hot meals to the needy. Sick people receive medical attention. We thank God for granting us the will and the means to help the destitute. We consider our outreach to the underserved to be service to Jesus Himself.

Education and Income

Material aid provides much needed, short-term, emergency aid. Yet, the best gift one can give a child is quality education, while the ultimate act of kindness to an adult is assistance toward financial independence. These improve lives for the long haul, breaking the cycle of poverty and restoring human dignity.

The Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School and Community Center exists to provide low-income children with high-quality, tuition-free education toward a bright future. The School is housed in a state-of-the art, environmentally friendly facility, fully equipped with high-tech equipment and various laboratories. This K-12 School provides both academic and life-skills education based on faith in God. It instills Christian values to carry its students triumphantly through the multitudes of life challenges and temptations. The School's supporting atmosphere builds self-confidence, enabling them to climb the highest peaks of achievement. The School builds character to help students become diligent, persistent, resilient and, most importantly, to remain humble as they climb the social ladder.



KG children symbolizing raising and developing talent.

The five AMAA *Shogh* centers help hundreds of vulnerable children overcome educational, emotional, relational, and psychological problems, and break the chain of poverty and abuse to live happy lives. The Christian atmosphere, coupled with the individualized, professional services provided by teachers, psychologists and social workers, helps the children experience and pursue healthy relationships toward fulfilling productive lives. The transformative impact on the children has been astonishing.

In addition to the above, AMAA implements various educational and cultural programs designed to give children and youth the gentle push necessary for educational and career success. Over three decades, the AMAA's scholarship program; tutorial centers; music, theater, and visual arts classes; and pre-school programs have helped thousands to live better lives.

Christian Testimony

The AMAA strives for rapid and effective response to emergency needs. People used to the harsh treatment of Soviet era functionaries are delighted by the respectful and responsive treatment received from the AMAA staff.

During the Artsakh war, we received requests for assistance to the displaced people of Artsakh from various government officials. Without hesitation, the AMAA responded. We were surprised at the certificates of gratitude received from the Prime Minister and Governor's offices for our services. Soon after the war, I bumped into two government employees who could not thank me enough for the kind and efficient cooperation of our staff. Such remarks are not uncommon.

The distinguishing characteristic of our services is attested to by our hosts during visits to remote villages. We often hear comments like, "We are grateful for all the aid that you bring. However, what we value most is your interest in us and the attention that you give. When you come, you listen and interact with us."

Our Alumni

AMAA Armenia boasts many successful alumni. We are proud of Siranush, Armenia's multi-year women's chess champion, who considers herself fortunate to have been under AMAA's care. We thank God for accomplished sculptor Gegham Begjanyan whose masterpieces adorn many art galleries and public parks. We cannot forget Hovig

Tamazyan who courageously died protecting Armenia's borders. Successful businessman Armen Gharibyan shares with us his humble beginnings and how God brought him out of them. We are proud to have invested in the life of Artak Beglaryan, State Minister of Artsakh, who, despite his blindness, studied in prestigious European and American universities and rapidly climbed the ladder of government hierarchy.

We do not shy away from boasting about world-renowned cellist Sevak Avanesyan, of whom American Cellist Bernard Greenhouse has called, "A musician of extraordinary virtuosity and a remarkable range of sound capacities." Sevak, who has performed in venues such as the Berlin Philharmonic Hall, Salle Gaveau in Paris, the Sidney Opera House, and the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, developed his skills in AMAA's Young Virtuosos, which was created and operated in partnership with *Hope for Armenia* of France in the 1990s. Yet, more than his achievements on world stages, we are proud of Sevak's humble spirit and love for his Homeland. Sevak's performance in the ruins of the Shushi Ghazanchechots church teared up every Armenian's eyes.

People are mesmerized by the rich and famous. God has a wider perspective. He equally delights in the inconspicuous professionals or tradesmen who live quiet lives of dedicated service to family and community. Our footprints have given rise to hundreds of Christian doctors, lawyers, secretaries, caring mothers, youth workers, pastors, and volunteers, who serve God and their communities through the AMAA, the Evangelical Church of Armenia, or other organizations.

3. The mindset that shapes the feet

The Christian mindset that shaped the AMAA feet and left the imprints on the Armenian landscape deserve special recognition.

As a Christian organization, AMAA considers each individual, regardless of education, age, looks, wealth or social standing, to be created in God's image and precious in His sight. The loving care and attention



Cellist Sevak at a young age, as a member of AMAA Armenia's Young Virtuosos.



Cellist Sevak Avanesyan performs at a recent Concert.

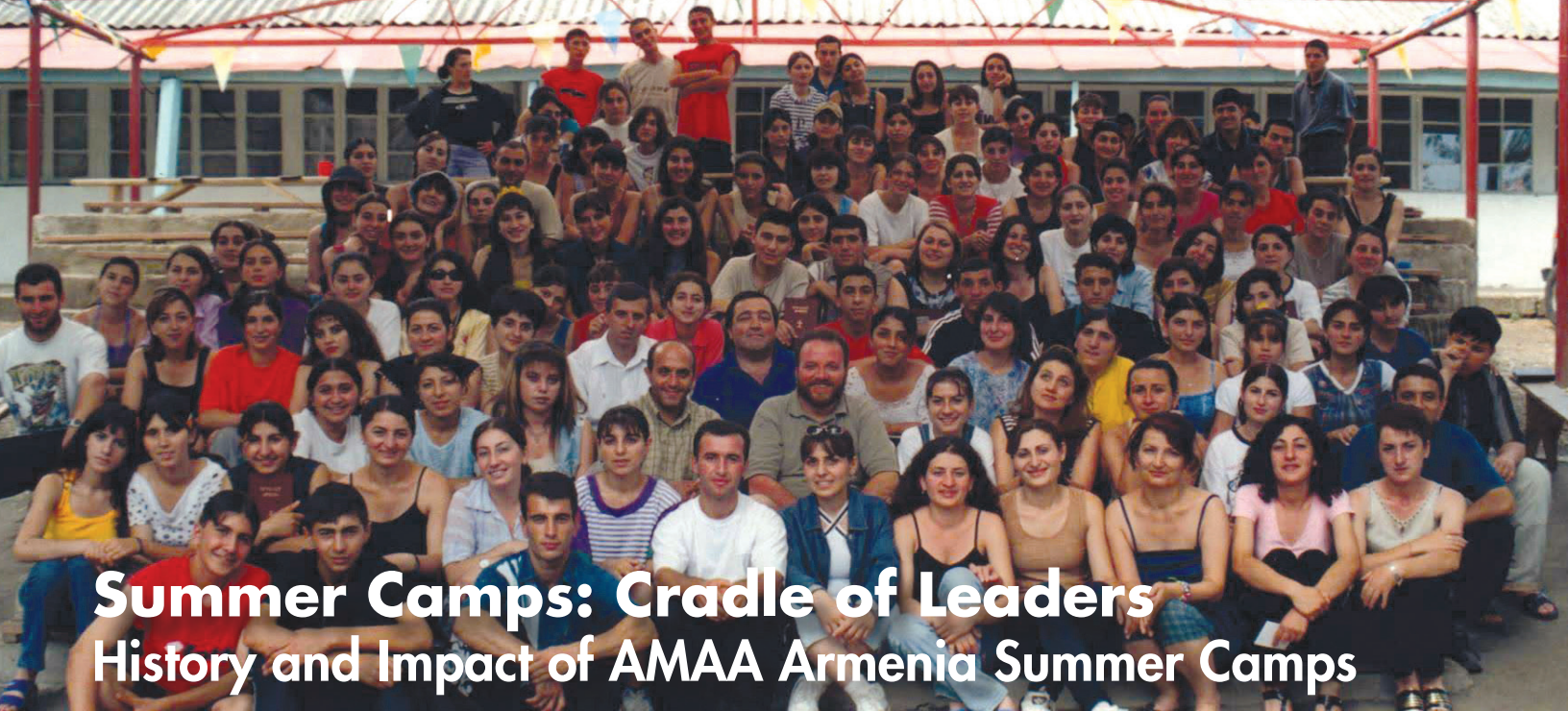
that we extend to the marginalized is service rendered unto Christ.

We believe that God has endowed individuals with far greater potential than they demonstrate. We help our colleagues harness their unrealized capacity through continuous learning, personal growth, freedom to innovate and fail, always giving them the credit they deserve. We strive to make the AMAA workplace pleasant, supportive and uplifting.

Jesus came to earth so we "may have life and have it to the full." Over its 30-year history, AMAA Armenia has helped tens of thousands of our brothers and sisters live fuller lives. They represent the footprints we have left behind. This is what motivates and drives us. This is our "life...to the full." □



*** Harout Nercessian**
is AMAA's
Representative in
Armenia.



Summer Camps: Cradle of Leaders

History and Impact of AMAA Armenia Summer Camps

AMAA's Camp Kar-Kar in Stepanakert, Artsakh, during the mid-1990s.

By Harout Nercessian*

AMAA Armenia camps strive to provide children – especially those from low-income families – with a week of summer adventures, games, excursions, arts & crafts, great food and even a dash of mischief. All served on a tray of Christian love.

1. Creation and History of the Armenia Camps

The creation of the AMAA Armenia camps can be traced back to the pre-independence Soviet period of summer 1990, when a group of Armenian Evangelicals from France and California, led by Rev. Gilbert Léonian, ran a 21-day camp for 150 children at Camp Parvana in Dzaghgatzor.

In August 1991, the AMAA sent volunteers from Montreal to run Daily Vacation Bible Schools in cooperation with local churches.

The 1992 AMAA Camp season, held in *Nor Hajin*, 20 kilometers outside of Yerevan, was both historic and consequential. This inaugural camp season launched the AMAA Camp Program that, during ensuing

decades, would host thousands of young campers, instilling in them Christian and national values. Several ECA pastors, lay leaders, AMAA employees and volunteers consider the 1992 camp season their spiritual birthplace.

In 2003, the AMAA purchased Camp Zepur in the Hankavan region of Armenia and renamed it AMAA Camp Sheen Shoghig.

The AMAA Artsakh Camp Program started in the post-war summer of 1995 at Camp Kar-Kar near Stepanakert. These were formative years for the newly independent country. Many AMAA Artsakh employees, volunteers and community members were introduced to the AMAA at Camp Kar-Kar where they first learned about God's love. The program moved to Shushi in 2003 when the AMAA acquired a property and converted it to a camp, which they named the AMAA Camp Bedrosian.

These camps are jointly operated by the Evangelical Church of Armenia (ECA) and the AMAA. They are enjoyed by chil-

dren and youth from ECA Sunday schools, various AMAA programs, and by other qualifying children. The AMAA also holds day camps in over 30 towns and villages for children who cannot attend the sleep away camps. Every summer, 5,000 children participate in these programs.

The AMAA Armenia Summer Camp Program is of personal significance to me. The camps of 1992 and 1995 where I volunteered, left a lasting impact on me. Later, when I moved to Armenia, I directed the AMAA Camp Program from 1996 until 2004.

2. Impact of the Camps

No one disputes that the childhood and young adult years are the most formative periods of one's life. World views, including belief systems and values are shaped during these early periods.

Upon arrival, campers are divided into small groups of 10, each led by a camp counselor. Most activities are done in small groups. Campers and counselors sleep in the same room, eat at the same table, hold group



Camp Bedrosian, Shushi, Artsakh.



Camp Sheen Shoghig, Hankavan, Armenia.



Camp Sheen Shoghig, Hankavan, Armenia.

devotionals and discussions, and compete against other groups in sports. They learn to collaborate. They discuss, argue, negotiate, resolve conflicts, help one another and laugh together. They become team players.

The supportive, festive Christian atmosphere of the AMAA/ECA camps leaves a lasting impression in the hearts and minds of the campers. They renew old friendships, make new friends, participate in fun-filled games, sports and arts & crafts activities. The minds and souls of the campers are challenged in educational programs and Biblical teachings. The campers are invited to consider God and trust Him. Many experience God's presence and return home with Christ in their hearts and pleasant memories permanently etched in their minds.

For many, returning from camp means the beginning of new engagements and activities in the AMAA and ECA programs. They attend Sunday schools, youth ministries, and various educational programs. The repeated cycle of summer camp, followed by a year of active engagement gradually transforms the campers into responsible and productive Christian citizens who are equipped to make the world a better place.

We do not hide the fact that these camps have also been the cradle of young families. Our youth camp programs have effectively served as family incubators. Young men and women from various parts of the country meet, fall in love, build relationships, and eventually marry. We rejoice over these young Christian families – many of whom are now active members of our communities.



Armen Gharibyan at AMAA Summer Camp.

3. Camp Legacy

The AMAA Camp Program counts many leaders, pastors, businessmen and women and successful professionals among its alumni. Here are two of them:

Armen Gharibyan is a young, successful scientist-businessman. He is a leading authority in renewable energy and hi-tech agriculture. The solar panel farms that his company has installed produce a significant portion of Armenia's renewable electricity.

Artak Beglaryan lost his sight at a young age, but it did not deter him from pursuing higher education in Armenia, Europe and the United States. He rapidly climbed the ladder of the Artsakh govern-



Armen Gharibyan today, a successful scientist-businessman.



Artak Beglaryan at AMAA's Camp Kar-Kar in Stepanakert, Artsakh, with his mother and AMAA Social Worker Anahit Danielyan.

ment public service structure. Recently, he was appointed State Minister (equivalent to Prime Minister) of Artsakh. Artak has many pleasant memories of his days at the AMAA Artsakh Camp.

The legacy of the AMAA camps can be compared to an iceberg. Its visible portion consists of the exceptional summer fun and unforgettable memories for thousands of children and young adults. The invisible, yet the largest and most impactful, portion of the camps' legacy consists of the countless hearts and minds that have been shaped by the Christian values that are indispensable for a fulfilling life. Hearts and minds that make the world a better place. □



Artak Beglaryan is currently the State Minister of Artsakh Republic.



* **Harout Nercessian** is AMAA's Representative in Armenia.

Armenian Evangelicals Advocates of Education and Supporters of Values

By Melanya Geghamyan*

Armenian Evangelicals have always valued and given great importance to education. Their educational priority is to teach human values and a dignified Armenian-Christian education to Armenians.

The most important cornerstones of the Armenian Evangelical community in the Diaspora are the Armenian Evangelical schools and higher education institutions, founded by the Armenian Evangelical Churches and the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA).

To this day, the AMAA and the Armenian Evangelical Church faithfully continue to sponsor Armenian educational institutions from kindergarten to higher education, and provide a comprehensive upbringing for the students based on the Christian faith.

One of the components of the AMAA's mission is to give support and assistance in the field of education starting from KGs. The schools create a conducive environment for the primary education of children, based on modern teaching aids, for the comprehensive, harmonious development of students, and the formation of exemplary citizens guided by their universal moral values.

Emphasizing that a quality early childhood education is a sound investment for communities at large, the AMAA supports four Kindergartens in Artsakh. They are the Hakob and Lydia Baghdigian KG in Stepanakert, Krikor Garabed Bilezikian KG in Shushi (until the Artsakh war in 2020), Yeprem and Zabel Basmajian KG in Askeran and Rev. Dr. Movses Janbazian KG in Martakert.

The AMAA kindergartens in Artsakh, as are public education schools for pre-school children, are overseen by the Ministries of Education and local education bodies. The content of the educational work of the kindergartens is determined by the state program for the upbringing of the children. They provide physical, mental, aesthetic and work education based on the age characteristics of the children. Kindergarten lifestyles



Upper grade students at Avedisian School.

are devoted to a variety of activities, especially didactic games, which contribute to the development of speech, hearing, counting, color skills and other skills. During the lessons the children get acquainted with the phenomena of nature and social life, learn to draw, build, sing, master basic knowledge and be ready for the next step of their educational path.

In 1999, the AMAA added one more school to its list of educational institutions, the Armenian Evangelical Educational Complex in Yerevan, Armenia, named after Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian. It quickly became an integral part of AMAA's humanitarian efforts.

At the Avedisian School, children are the center of attention. Continuing the vast experience of Armenian Evangelical schools in the Middle East, the educational complex maintains and develops the best principles of the educational system established over the decades. These include the world experience of private schools not only with them, but also with school comfort conditions and additional programs. Through its programs, the Avedisian School provides students with

opportunities that are closely linked to an individual's personal, social and emotional development. Inspired by the Christian value system, Avedisian School offers a certain philosophy of life, contributing in a unique way to the health of the planet and its inhabitants. It encourages students and educators, as well as advocates of education, to reflect on personal, professional, social, environmental and universal values. The purpose of this reflection and emphasis on the search for truth is to connect faith to learning and to free the individual from limitations so that he or she can fully appreciate life, which is the expression of God's dynamic activity and love. □

(Translated from Eastern Armenian by Louisa Janbazian)



***Melanya Geghamyan** is the Principal of Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School in Yerevan, Armenia.



Hope For Armenia and AMAA

A 30 Year Partnership

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor.
Ecclesiastes 4:9

By **Rev. Gilbert Léonian***

There are divine appointments and human encounters in life which guide the entire history of God's work. This is what we experienced in our partnership between the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) and Hope for Armenia (Espoir pour l'Arménie) of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches of France.

Newly appointed in June 1987, Rev. Dr. Movses Janbazian visited the Synod of the Armenian Evangelical Churches of France in Valence in May 1988. Bonds of friendship and trust were formed between him and members of our Union. On December 7 of the same year the devastating earthquake occurred in Armenia. In April 1989, a delegation from the Armenian Evangelical World Council visited the devastated areas in Armenia. Among the delegation were Servants of God, two of whom left us too soon: Rev. Daniel Sahagian, President of the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches of France, and Rev. Janbazian, Executive Director of the AMAA.

Revs. Sahagian and Janbazian came back from their May visit traumatized by what they saw and experienced. They

communicated their vision to those around them: "You have to take action quickly without wasting time."

In May 1989, under the initiative of Rev. Sahagian, the Hope for Armenia Association was born with dual objectives: Provide this suffering people with material bread and spiritual bread. Both organizations laid the solid foundation of this collaboration which continues to this day more than 30 years later. The AMAA had much experience as it had already been engaged in Christian humanitarian work in many countries around the world since 1918.

One of our first experiences of common ministry was in August 1990 when we organized day camps and summer camps in Dzaghgadzor for Armenian children. We were in the Soviet era and the proclamation of the Gospel was watched. Thanks to some Communist friends who helped us with the organization, we experienced our first Christian summer camp during the Soviet era.

In the Dzaghgadzor Camp called "Parvana," we welcomed 150 children. In

addition to meals, cultural activities, games, crafts and walks, we proclaimed the message of the Gospel to them every day. Using the flannelgraph illustrations from the Child Evangelization Fellowship, we introduced the campers to the life of Christ and taught them their first children's Christian songs and prayers.

Our team was composed of 12 French people led by Boghos Haladjian and me, and four Americans sent by the AMAA and led by Rev. Daniel Albarian.

One of the first fruits of this blessed stay was Andranik Mardoyan and his wife Melanya who accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. Both are engaged today in the educational and communication programs of the AMAA in Armenia and are valuable collaborators.

In 1992, we continued our collaboration with the AMAA by way of the Arzni summer camp. This time we collaborated with a team led by Harout Nercessian from Canada.

Our partner in Armenia was Levon Bardakdjian, who had just been appointed AMAA's Representative in Armenia. In



Camp in Spitak organized by Hope for Armenia in the early 1990s.



Spitak Camp counselors organized by Hope for Armenia. L to R: Leah and Rev. Gilbert Léonian, Melanya Geghamyan, Boghos and Maryse Haladjian and Andranik Mardoyan pictured in the early 1990s.

1994, we broadened our collaboration by relocating our joint activities in Spitak, the epicenter of the earthquake. The conditions were very precarious. The AMAA and its Representative helped us organize two sessions of five-day camps, each with a total of 200 children. We stayed in the prefabricated buildings of the No. 2 School which had been destroyed in the earthquake where many perished. It was a collaboration of France and the AMAA team of Vanadzor which had just been born.

That same year, the AMAA also put at our disposal its mobile clinic which, together with Doctor Serge Tchémazian from France, allowed us to treat many patients.

The collaboration between Hope for Armenia and the AMAA gained new momentum in 1994 when Rev. René Léonian was appointed the new Representative of AMAA in Armenia. Before his appointment to serve in Armenia, Rev. Léonian was the first President of Hope for Armenia (1989). The result was a precious link that consolidated our collaboration in many areas. He also became the correspondent of Hope for Armenia in Armenia. From then until the end of his service in Armenia in 2011, with Rev. René, Hope for Armenia was able to set up the 12 current programs



Representatives of Hope for Armenia meet with AMAA Armenia Staff in Yerevan - May 2021.



Sanctuary of Evangelical Church of Armenia in Sisian renovated by funds provided by Hope for Armenia.



Hope for Armenia Team in Spitak meet for their mission and outreach programs during the summer of 2002.



The opening ceremony of Hope for Armenia Dental Clinic in Vanadzor during the mid-1990s.

thanks to Rev. Léonian's support, dedication and follow-up of our actions.

Since 2011, Harout Nercessian has been the Representative of Hope for Armenia and coordinates all our programs on behalf of the AMAA and its Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian. In particular, he has assisted with sponsorship, the soup kitchen ministry and clearance of containers from customs.

Since the 44-day Artsakh war, Hope for Armenia and the AMAA have strengthened their ties and collaboration even more, for the benefit of our compatriots traumatized by this terrible war and its sad consequences, both in Artsakh and Armenia.

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor..."

this is exactly what these two associations experience.

We praise God for this beautiful partnership and for the blessed fruits it has produced and still bears today.

We thank the AMAA and all its past and present leaders for this fraternal atmosphere of mutual trust for 30 years. We ask God to help us rise to new challenges faced by our people in Armenia and Artsakh. □



*** Rev. Gilbert Léonian** is a founding member of Hope for Armenia.

Evangelical Church of Armenia Impact in the Motherland

By Pastor Aram Babajanyan*

This year, the worldwide Armenian Evangelical family is celebrating the 175th Anniversary of the Armenian Evangelical Church. It is a historic event, because with this celebration we commemorate and affirm the presence, historical role and the mission of the Armenian Evangelical Church in the Armenian reality. With this celebration, we also look forward to the completion of the second century of our history and to the vision of the next 25 years.

For the Evangelical Church of Armenia (ECA) in the Motherland, especially in this jubilee year, it is very important to value, understand and deeply realize our 175-year-old past and to look to the future. It is also very important for our identity, mission, and God-pleasing and patriotic service. This 175th Anniversary represents a very important turning point in the history of our Church, especially considering the present socio-economic and other aspects of the broader context of our people and the country in which find ourselves today.

When we speak about ECA in Armenia after independence, we must first understand that this should be done on the platform of historical analysis and viewed in the context of the larger history of the Armenian Evangelical Church and World Reformation in general

The Reformation Movement in the sixteenth century, and later the birth of the Evangelical Church, was primarily ecclesiastical and religious in nature. However, it was not limited only to that. The Birth of the Evangelical Church and the formation of Evangelicalism became crucial events in world history. The world Evangelicalism brought with it a real leap in the history of Christian theology and manifested itself in its strong intellectual spirituality, which created a new ideological "progressive basis," a new concept of life. The Evangelicalism, through its spirituality, theology and practical translation, became the elite bringing with it scientific, educational, cultural,



Evangelical Church of Armenia in Yerevan holds Worship Services in the rented hall of the of Union of Architects House early 1990s.

political, social and legal unprecedented development and enlightenment. Today's developed world is based on the concept of Evangelical or Protestant civilization.

If we refer to the Armenian Evangelical Movement and then to the Armenian Evangelical Church, it is certainly an integral part of the Armenian Church and the Armenian reality. The Armenian Church is also a unique and important part of the world Evangelical Church. The Armenian Evangelical Church was the first Evangelical Church to be founded in the Greater Middle East. However, its foundation was not accidental either. For centuries Constantinople was the civilization, religious, intellectual, cultural and socio-economic center of the East. This is a historical reality.

Just as the world Evangelicalism became an elite, the Armenian Evangelical Church also became an elite in the Armenian reality in Western Armenia, and to a lesser extent in Eastern Armenia. During the first 50 years after its founding, the Armenian Evangelical Church established among Armenians its own intellectual and practical spirituality, creating around it its own way of thinking, world view, culture and mini-civilization perception. It was during this period that the Armenian Evangelical Church with its numerous schools, colleges

and higher educational institutions in Western Armenia, and with its zealous service, printing house, school in Shushi, and its patriotic service to the orphans in Alexandropoulos, brought great spiritual, educational, cultural enlightenment and constant awakening.

The Armenian Genocide and Stalin's repressions caused the downfall and loss of Armenians and the Armenian Evangelical Church as well. The Armenian Evangelical Church in Western Armenia lost almost everything. The remnants who escaped from that hell found refuge in various parts of the world, and began to organize themselves, form communities and take the path of self-preservation. In Eastern Armenia, because of the repressions of the Soviet government, only two underground communities of the Armenian Evangelical Church remained, which were united with local Baptist communities. One was in Yerevan and the other in Gyumri.

The next 70 years was a long and difficult historical period of struggle for survival for the ECA in Soviet Armenia. Because of harsh and oppressive politics, these two surviving communities shrunk in size and became very small. They were mostly made up of representatives of the older generation. In ecclesiastical sense, this period can be

called one of the most difficult times in the history of the ECA. This hopeless situation ended in 1991 with the independence of Armenia and the establishment of the Third Republic. With the independence, a new historical phase began for the Armenian Evangelical Church and great opportunities opened. The atheist structure that had been in control for seven decades collapsed, creating favorable conditions for the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, spreading of the Good News and Christian teachings. The people were thirsty for the Word of God, and during the first years of the Independence a great awakening started.

However right before the Independence and shortly after it, the situation in Armenia was very hard as two years prior to that the country was hit with the tragic earthquake and afterwards the it went into a long and harsh war. Armenia found itself in a very deep crisis – collapsed economy, disaster, war, serious demographic problems, absence of energetic resources and almost total isolation.

During this period of time, the Armenian Evangelical Church decided to return to its pre-Soviet state. There were two weak, barely standing Armenian Evangelical communities which had almost lost the Armenian Evangelical doctrines, tradition, structure, with no local Armenian Evangelical clergy at all, and limited material resources.

It is in this internal and external situation that the Evangelical Church of Armenia in the Motherland began the modern, difficult and harsh period of its history. This was a difficult but joyful period of rebirth, refoundation and reorganization. At this crucial stage, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) had an important role in the Church and assistance, which continues to this day. With the joint efforts of the Armenian Evangelical World Council, Armenian Evangelical Unions worldwide, and the AMAA, the delicate and very important mission of reorganizing the Armenian Evangelical Church in Armenia began. These efforts started the process of replanting the Armenian Evangelical communities in different locations of Armenia.

At the same time, a serious process of intensive training of pastors, preachers, church leaders and ministers began. It was for this cherished purpose that the Evangelical Theological Academy of Armenia was founded in 1997, which became a forge

for the training of the Armenian Evangelical clergy and leaders. In parallel with the training of community leaders, the general structure of the ECA began to get its shape. The next important strategic line for the replanting and reorganization the ECA was the construction of church buildings, which confirmed the permanent presence and the historical renaissance of the Armenian Evangelical communities. ECA also began to build its relations with the state, the Mother Church, the sister churches and other institutions. At this stage of its reorganization, the ECA, began to pay great attention to educational and social ministries.

During the last decade, a new and significant stage in the history of ECA in Armenia has begun. The church adopted a new course of its strategy and priorities. Attention was drawn and efforts were made first to the process of reorganization and reformation of the general church structure. The internal activities and relations in the church structure were organized in a well-regulated manner. Much attention was paid to the development and implementation of all mechanisms of democratic governance. Emphasis was placed on the creation of the auxiliary structures and bodies of ECA which would help develop church life, different ministries and church progress.

The spiritual, qualitative-numerical growth of the local churches, the internal church organization and the growth of self-sufficiency of the communities became a central agenda item.

The next major strategic contribution to this important phase of the reorganization was to ensure the continued spiritual growth and solid academic training of pastors and leaders. The issue of raising a new generation of ministers became real. The ECA decided to take this to a new level, to move to new horizons, and to have educated clergy. To that sense, the ECA established close cooperation with the Near East School of Theology in Beirut and began sending students to Beirut for higher theological education and the preparation for pastoral ministry. This was a historic step for the Evangelical Church in Armenia as it was imperative to have well trained pastors with higher theological education. It is also important because the students, living in a rich Armenian Evangelical environment, saw, grasped and brought with them the rich Armenian Evangelical tradition, consciousness, culture and thinking. Two pastors who

have already been educated in Beirut are now serving as pastors in different cities of Armenia. Another two students will return from Beirut soon after graduation and will begin their ministry in Armenia. Another new student is about to move to Beirut to start his theological studies. Thus, the process of shaping the ECA's general church structure, the local churches and the clergy is continuous and constant.

Today, as we celebrate the 175th Anniversary of the Armenian Evangelical Church, our Motherland is going through very difficult times for our nation and State. Faced with such a reality, the Armenian Evangelical Church must have two goals – for ourselves in this historic phase of our reorganization.

First, at this historic stage we must deeply realize, recognize and appreciate our unique Armenian Evangelical spirituality. This spirituality is based only on the Scripture. The Armenian Evangelical spirituality emphasizes the role of the Bible as the highest authority, building its doctrines, church life, value system, mission and everyday life concept on the spirit and content of the Scripture. We must remember our roots, our rich tradition and history, and we must clearly realize that we are the continuation of all of this. We must never forget that Evangelicalism is an elite in its kind.

Second, at this difficult stage for our nation and country, the Evangelical Church of Armenia has its own word to say and action to take and that is expected from us. In other words, we must look at the present reality and issues through the lenses of the Scripture and respond to it only by staying loyal to the Word. As a Church we have the imperative to see deeper and further understand the order of things and suggest Bible based solutions to the larger community. And the most important thing is to stay faithful to the Gospel in all circumstances and historical turns.

Evangelicalism has always been an enlightenment and has been the educational, cultural, progressive and ideological locomotive. □



*** Pastor Aram Babajanyan** is the Pastor of the Evangelical Church of Armenia in Gyumri.

The Evangelical Church of Armenia in Eastern Armenia

History at a Glance



By **Pastor Aram Babajanyan***

Introduction

When we think about the formation, history and the course of the Evangelical Church of Armenia (ECA), we first go back to 1846, Constantinople (Turkey), Pera district. We mark this crucial year and the next decisive period of almost two decades. We remember the establishment and the flourishing of the ECA in Western Armenia before the Armenian Genocide with great pride. In particular, we remember our four unions with their many churches and educated clergy. We remember our remarkable spiritual, educational, enlightening and public service. We remember many schools, colleges, theological seminaries and other institutions established by the Armenian Evangelical Church. We remember our patriotic mission in almost the whole territory of Western Armenia. However, next to

Western Armenia, we must mention Eastern Armenia and emphasize that the ECA in Eastern Armenia was formed, developed, spread and organized almost parallel to Western Armenia.

The History of Armenian Evangelicalism in Eastern Armenia

In Constantinople and Eastern Armenia, the Evangelical movement did not appear all of a sudden. It was directly connected with the social, cultural, ideological, educational and scientific awakening in the region. Both the higher awareness of human rights and the freedom of speech, thought and expression created a new generation of intellectuals. The young, educated and enlightened members of the society, who received their education in the European universities and in the Russian Empire, generated new quali-

ties and ways of thinking and presented new challenges to the larger community. This influenced the spiritual life, public perceptions and of course the church. Thus, the birth of Evangelical ideas and movement in Eastern Armenia was directly related to this.

The Evangelical movement in Eastern Armenia started in the early 19th century. However, it should be noted that in contrast to the Western Armenian reality, where in mid-19th century the ECA was officially recognized as a separate religious community by the State, the Russian government in Eastern Armenia did not officially allow the activities of Evangelical preachers and there was no officially recognized religious community until the early year of 20th century.

Although the government banned the activities of Armenian Evangelical preachers, underground Evangelicalism gradually began to grow, develop and give birth to the first local Armenian Evangelical communities. Already in the mid-19th century, there were Armenian Evangelical communities in Yerevan, Vagharshapat, Alexandropol, Kars, Tbilissi, Baku, Batumi and Sukhumi. In the 1820-1890s, the center of Armenian Evangelicalism in the Caucasus was Shamakhi and Karabakh. The Armenian Evangelical schools of Shushi, Shamakhi and Tbilissi (Georgia) were very popular in Transcaucasia. The Swiss missionaries, who promoted the Armenian Evangelical movement in Shushi, received permission from the tsarist government in 1823, settled in the city and began their Evangelical activities. From the end of the 19th century and especially in the beginning of the 1900s, Yerevan became the center of Evangelicalism in Eastern Armenia.

In 1914, the Armenian Evangelicals of Yerevan province submitted a petition to Vorontsov-Dashkov, Governor of Caucasus,



Evangelical Church of Armenia in Vanadzor.



Evangelical Church of Armenia in Yerevan.

to be recognized as the "Armenian Evangelical Ararat Community." Instead, respecting their request, he formally ratified it in one of his letters (Jan. 31, 1914, N 4150). That year the Armenian Evangelical Ararat Union was formed, the center of which was Yerevan. The Union included Armenian Evangelical Christians from the former province of Yerevan and was fully formed, organized and operated by local Armenian Evangelical leaders. It became the most influential and largest Armenian Evangelical Union in the Caucasus. The formation and organization of this Union helped Western Armenian Evangelicals who migrated to the Caucasus after World War I, as well as the American Board Missionary Society, which operated in the Caucasus in 1916, and later the Near East Relief. The Ararat Union unified the Armenian Evangelical communities of Yerevan, Vagharshapat, Alexandropol, Kars, Nor Bayazet and their surrounding villages. The Eastern Armenian and Western Armenian Evangelicals experiencing difficult times merged and formed a strong and qualitatively new Union in Armenia.

At the formation of the Ararat Union, the Chairman of the Union was Rev. Vahan Mikaelyan, who was a graduate of Etchmiadzin Seminary. In 1893, Rev. Mikaelyan was invited to Tabriz and taught for 10 years at the local American Missionary Memorial School while preaching at the ECA in Tabriz. He returned to Yerevan in 1903 as Pastor of the local Armenian Evangelical Church. During this time the American Relief Committee for the Middle East began its charitable work in the Caucasus. The American Relief Committee in its humanitarian ministry started cooperating with Rev. Mikaelyan and with other Evangelical pastors, such as Rev. Hakob Mudoyan and Pastor Nariman Nikoghosyan. Rev. Mikaelyan, due to his experience and organizational skills, soon gained a great reputation and influence among the leaders of the Armenian Evangelicals in Yerevan, Kars, Alexandropol, Tabriz, Tbilissi (Georgia) and with the American Relief Committee.

Evangelical Church of Armenia during the Years of First Republic of Armenia

In 1918, with the proclamation of the independence of the Republic of Armenia on May 28, and despite the hard conditions of the newly created and weak statehood and political, social and economic alarms, the Armenian Evangelical churches



Evangelical Church of Armenia in Gyumri.

entered a new period of unique history. The migrating Western Armenian Evangelicals gave new importance to the evangelical work in Yerevan, Alexandropol and other places. In 1919, there were eight organized churches in Armenia and many experienced Armenian Evangelical pastors, preachers and evangelists. The number of Armenian Evangelicals in Armenia was about 3,000, and in the whole Transcaucasia about 3,500-4,000. Almost all communities had their own churches or fellowships, Sunday schools and ordained pastors. One of the most famous Evangelical figures of the Ararat Union during the early years of the First Republic was Rev. Hakob Mudoyan who was born in the village of Ishkhanigom in the Hayots Dzor region of Vaspurakan. He was the secretary of the central council of the Ararat Union. In 1915, he took part in the heroic battle of Van-Vaspurakan and also organized and led the self-defense battles of Hayots Dzor. Rev. Mudoyan held responsible positions on the Near East Relief Committee and the Etchmiadzin Brotherhood Aid Committee, chaired by Hovhannes Tumanyan.

Middle East Relief Committee and its cooperation with Evangelical Church of Armenia

In 1916, the Middle East Relief Committee (American Near East Relief) began its humanitarian and charitable ministry in Eastern Armenia. The American Relief

Committee began serving the Armenian people by opening orphanages, hospitals and schools. However, they were new to Eastern Armenia and unfamiliar with the local people, their culture, psychology and many peculiarities. The Relief Committee started looking for someone to lead them. Someone who would be well informed, aware of the situation and trustworthy.

They found Rev. Hakob Mudoyan and he was invited to work for the Relief Committee. Rev. Mudoyan, who had previously worked with them in Van for many years, knew their pro-Armenian spirit, resigned from his work and accepted the offer. The goal was the same, the work was the same, only the means were changing. The Brotherhood Aid Committee of Etchmiadzin did not oppose Mudoyan's decision, on the contrary, it appreciated his dedication and granted him a certificate proving and evaluating his service.

The American Relief Committee then began its vast, vital service to the Armenian people in Eastern Armenia. It was a non-political, charitable organization founded by the United States Congress. In April 1919, an agreement was signed between the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the Relief Committee according to which as of May 1, 1919 all Armenian orphanages and children's hospitals in Armenia and Georgia were transferred to the American Relief's care and leadership. Alexandropol became the largest orphanage in the world, it was a

home to about 30,000 orphans. According to the statistics of the Relief Committee, under its care in 1919-21 there were 75 orphanages and 10 hospitals. In his June 27, 1919 report, Artak Vardapet, interim Leader of Kars diocese, wrote: "American Relief by taking care of the orphans of Yerevan, Alexandropol and Kars, saves the lives of thousands of orphans." After the establishment of Soviet government in Armenia, the Relief Committee continued its ministry for several years. Beginning in 1923, the Soviet government started restricting the Relief Committee's activities, and finally on January 1, 1931 it was completely stopped.

During the years of the Relief activity, besides Rev. Mudoyan, many other Armenian Evangelical figures, pastors and preachers worked closely with the Relief Committee. Leaders and figures such as Rev. Arsen Keorkezyan, Tigran Abeghyan, Rev. Hovhannes Bznuni, Rev. Titos Manukyan, Abraham Melik-Janyan, Tsolak Papikyan, Mushegh Sahakyan, Rafael Melik-Adamyanyan and many others. The diligent Armenian Evangelical spiritual leaders were very helpful ministers and figures in the Relief Committee by taking responsible positions of counselors, overseers, preachers, evangelists, translators, and staff in orphanages and hospitals.

Armenian Evangelical Eastern Armenia Intellectual Figures

It is worthy to remember that the ECA pursued its own educational development

immediately after starting its service in Eastern Armenia. The development of education, mental and intellectual progress, enlightenment, and the adoption of progressive views and ideas have always been the focus of the Armenian Evangelical Church. Proof of this are the Armenian Evangelical intellectuals who entered the field of Armenian reality in the middle of the 19th century before the formation of the Republic of Armenia. Along with Rev. Vahan Mikaelyan and Rev. Hayk Mudoyan, it is worthy to mention other spiritual, educational, scientific and public figures and activists who made a great contribution and left a significant mark, especially in the Eastern Armenian reality, such as Abraham Amikhanyan and Sedrak Tarayan.

Evangelical Church of Armenia during the Soviet Period

On December 15, 1923, the government of Soviet Armenia officially recognized the Armenian Evangelical Ararat Union and registered the constitution of the Union. In the 1920s in Soviet Armenia, there were 15 Armenian Evangelical ecclesiastical communities recognized by the government, and 15 places where religious meetings were allowed. Despite the fact that in 1923 the Soviet government officially recognized the Ararat Union, by the end of the 1920s authorities began to intensively obstruct the activities of Armenian Evangelicals and secretly persecute prominent Evangelical figures.

Step by step, Stalin's dictatorship and repressions began to reveal and have direct influence on the Armenian Evangelical Church. Starting in 1927, Soviet authorities in Armenia canceled the licenses of Armenian Evangelical preachers. Persecution began, and many pastors and Evangelicals were imprisoned or exiled. The number of churches gradually decreased, and activities of the Armenian Evangelical Churches were banned in the USSR. The Armenian Evangelical Ararat Union stopped its existence. During this difficult period, small groups of Armenian Evangelicals remained mainly in Yerevan and Leninakan (Gyumri). When the Soviet Union government passed the Freedom of Conscience Act in 1944, some Armenian Evangelical groups in Armenia were able to function and organize. Members of the former Ararat Union, such as the head of the community of Samaghar village of Etchmiadzin region Benyamin Kocharyan, Rev. Vahan Mikaelyan's son Arshavir Mikaelyan and others, helped preserve small Armenian Evangelical groups in Armenia in the 1930s and 1940s, and in 1945 began to rebuild at least one community with the name of the Ararat Union.

On May 20, 1945, the Ararat Union of Armenian Evangelicals was reestablished. The community of Yerevan had 46 communicative members. In 1945, the government of the Armenian SSR allowed the community to operate with the right to have a place of worship located on Nar Dos Street in Yerevan. But since the USSR government in 1944 allowed all Evangelical groups and the most prominent group in USSR – Baptists – to operate only in a single union, the Armenian Evangelical and Baptist communities in Armenia were forced to unite (first in Yerevan, later in Leninakan) and were called the Community of Evangelical Christians and Baptists. It became a part of the Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church of the Soviet Union.

The church of these newly emerged Evangelical Christians and Baptists was strengthened and received flesh and blood thanks to the traditional Armenian Evangelical families who moved to Armenia from various colonies around the world during the great repatriation of 1946-1948, passing on the unique culture of the ECA and everyday life to this newly formed community. In February 1946, the government of Soviet Armenia officially recognized the Armenian Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church in Ye-



Evangelical Church of Armenia Publications: Periodicals, calendars, Bibles and Hymnal.



Catholicos Karekin I greets the audience with his congratulatory remarks during the 150th Anniversary celebration of the Armenian Evangelical Church held at the National Academic Opera and Ballet Theater in Yerevan, in July 1996.

revan, which also included the community of the Leninakan Evangelical Baptist Church. The ECA continued its existence and activity in this form and condition until the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Republic of Armenia.

Evangelical Church of Armenia after the Independence of the Republic of Armenia

After the difficult atheistic years of the Soviet period, the ECA in Armenia resumed and reestablished its active ministry after the tragic Spitak earthquake in 1988. This new era for the ECA, started when the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), under the leadership of its Executive Director Rev. Dr. Movses Janbazian began its activities in Armenia soon after the earthquake. The AMAA immediately came to Soviet Armenia to help eliminate the consequences of the earthquake and the disaster that struck Armenia and to support the

Armenian people in those difficult times. The AMAA began to help and serve our people with numerous social, material, medical, educational, Christian education programs and initiatives. In October 1991, the AMAA officially included Armenia in its geography, opened an office in Yerevan, and by 1992, branches were opened in Gyumri, Vanadzor and Stepanavan, in 1995 in Artsakh, in 1997 in Goris and in many other towns and villages.

In September 1994, the Armenian Evangelical World Council sent Rev. Dr. René Nerses Léonian to Armenia as its representative and as of November of the same year, he was also the representative of the AMAA. He was called to synchronize the ministries of the Armenian Evangelical World Council and AMAA programs. On March 17, 1994, the Council of the ECA adopted the ECA constitution, which was registered by the state government on July 1 of

the same year. The ECA received the privilege of operating legally in Armenia. The reestablishment of the ECA in Armenia simply is the continuation of the ECA, born in 1846 and the revival of the Armenian Evangelical Ararat Union established in 1914 in Eastern Armenia. The ECA included the Armenian Evangelical Churches of Yerevan, Vanadzor and Stepanavan. In the fall of 1994, these churches elected Rev. Léonian as the Senior Pastor and leader of the Armenian Evangelical Church. He served as ECA Senior Pastor and leader in Armenia from 1994 to 2011.

The official celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the ECA in 1996 at the National Academic Opera and Ballet Theater became very important for the reorganization and revival of the ECA in Armenia after independence. This celebration and especially the congratulatory-encouraging speech of Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin I. emphasized and confirmed several very important realities. First, the ECA's history of one

and a half centuries and its patriotic service and mission were confirmed and received a worthy assessment. Second, our presence, weight, role of the historical church and our mission in the life of our people, Armenian state and the Armenian society were reaffirmed and reestablished. The speech of the Catholicos of All Armenians also revealed the essence, content and the course of ECA relations with the Mother Church.

In 1997, the ECA and Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches of Eurasia jointly established the Evangelical Theological Academy of Armenia (ETAA). The main goal was to train highly qualified pastors, leaders and ministers. Here we must emphasize the role of ETAA, its importance and contribution to the ECA reorganization and development process. Almost all present pastors of the ECA have passed through the forge of the ETAA and are graduates of this institution. They received their basic theological education here. Almost all the responsible persons and numerous ministers of the current Christian Education field of the local Armenian Evangelical Churches have been educated and trained at the ETAA.

The official journal "Armenian Evangelical Church" was published in 1997. The publication of this journal also marked the organization and development of the ECA print media. The official journal was published on a quarterly basis, presenting the internal life and activities of the ECA, as well as the external relations and ministries.

The ECA considers education to be one of the most important and inseparable areas of its mission and service. This is a historical fact. The ECA believes preaching the Gospel of Christ and spreading the Good News includes the spiritual and mental enlightenment of the people. This is the reason why the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School was opened by the AMAA on September 20, 1999, with the aim of educating and upbringing the present and future generations of the Armenian nation. Avedisian School students receive a comprehensive education and Armenian-Christian upbringing. They enjoy the respect and love of teachers and educators. All this contributes to the formation of a high moral image of the Armenian new generation. Until the year 2000, under the leadership of Rev. Léonian and with the cooperation of the local pastors and Christian Education Directors, several Armenian Evangelical communities were established, particularly in Gyumri, Spitak,

Ijevan, Dilijan, Armavir, Goris, Talin, Maralik, Hrazdan, Alaverdi, and later in other locations in Armenia until 2006.

The Present Evangelical Church of Armenia

Currently the ECA has 23 local churches in almost all regions of Armenia and Artsakh. These churches include the central one at 18 Baghramyan Street in Yerevan, and the House of Hope in Yerevan, Shengavit district, the Southwest District of Yerevan, Stepanakert, Gyumri, Vanadzor, Stepanavan, Alaverdi, Spirakamut, Tumanyan, Spitak, Ijevan, Dilijan, Berd, Noyemberyan, Armavir, Artashat, Ayntap, Abovyan, Vardenis, Goris, Sisian and Kapan.

Since 2012, the ECA Senior Pastor is Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian. The ECA has 13 ordained pastors and 15 licensed preachers and assistant pastors. In recent years, the ECA has been paying great attention to deepening the higher theological education of pastors and raising their academic level. Rev. Melkonian has made a great contribution to this very important mission and for this purpose the ECA has established close cooperation with the well-known Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Beirut. The cooperation with the seminary is through the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches of the Near East. Two ECA pastors have already received their education at NEST and are serving in Armenia. Two more ECA students are currently studying at the Seminary.

The supreme body of ECA is its Council, which governs the church through its 11-member ECA Spiritual Council or central body. The Council has seven auxiliary com-



Children at Camp Sheen Shoghig in Hankavan, Armenia - August 2021.

mittees. The ECA has its own Constitution and internal Bylaws, according to which the church and community life is organized and regulated. ECA is in effective interchurch relations and cooperation with the Armenian Apostolic and Catholic Churches and jointly leads the Bible Society of Armenia, the Jinishian Foundation, the Armenian Round Table Foundation of the World Council of Churches, and the ECLOF.

The ECA, being an integral part of the Armenian Church, realizes its historical, traditional and unique role and mission in Armenia and among the Armenian people. Being faithful to its own mission, the foundation and the basis of the ECA's present and especially future ministry is first the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. This means to embody and translate the message of the Gospel and its content to all spheres of the life of the Armenian people.

The result is to change the quality of our individual, national and collective life. In addition to serving the spiritual awakening and growth of our people, the purpose of the ECA mission and service is also the general enlightenment, intellectual, educational and cultural development and rise of our people. The ECA also considers social and charitable service as an integral part of its mission. □



*** Pastor Aram Babajanyan** is the Pastor of the Evangelical Church of Armenia in Gyumri.

AMAA NEWS will in successive issues publish the history of the remaining Armenian Evangelical Unions worldwide.



ECA Annual Meeting July 2021.



EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF ARMENIA STEPANAVAN

“... Considering that God inspired us to build this House of Prayer for His glory and for the preaching of the Gospel, let us separate it with prayer, sanctify it, and dedicate it only to our Lord Jesus Christ, our Comforter and Teacher for the glory of the Holy Spirit.”

With these words, on July 18, 1999, AMAA Executive Director Rev. Dr. Movses Janbazian announced the opening of the newly constructed building of the Evangelical Church of Armenia in Stepanavan.

According to testimony from individuals and historical sources, the presence of Evangelicals in the Stepanavan region was much earlier than this event, dating back to the years 1910-1920. During the years of Stalin's persecution from 1930 onward, when religious institutions were banned, Evangelicals were forced to go underground and conduct Bible studies and worship services in secret. It was during those years that the Evangelicals and Baptists of Stepanavan united and formed house communities, gathering in the home of one of the believers.

"Our house was one of the first unregistered Evangelical Baptist churches in Stepanavan," said Aghavni Kirakosyan's granddaughter Tzoliné Mikaelyan, who is an employee at the Central office of the Evangelical Church of Armenia in Yerevan. "My maternal grandmother, who had been a member of the Evangelical Baptist Church

since 1927, transformed her living room into a church hall where worship services were held every Sunday. The preachers mainly came from Yerevan or Gyumri. My grandmother and her fellow believers have been called *pharmacions* for years, considering evangelicalism a heresy, but that didn't stop individuals who understood the truth of the Gospel was to live and spread that truth faithfully."

In October 1944, the Soviet Union allowed the activities of the Evangelicals and the Baptists in only one Union. The two were united in what became known as the Evangelical Christian and Baptist Community or Church. Only 44 years later, in 1991, after the proclamation of the independence of the Republic of Armenia, when religious freedom of conscience was declared in the country, the Evangelical Church of Armenia experienced a profound revival, returning from prayer homes to the Church structure.



Rev. Hrant Badalyan, Pastor of the Evangelical Church of Armenia in Stepanavan.



Stepanavan Church children.



Stepanavan Church youth.

The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) contributed a great deal to the awakening of the Evangelical Church of Armenia in Stepanavan. The AMAA, in addition to its charitable programs, made great contributions to training church leaders, organizing Christian education programs and activating community life. In 1992, the AMAA established an office in Stepanavan, which temporarily became the church building for former members and new believers of the Armenian Evangelical Baptist Churches, and a Sunday school for children, adolescents and youth was formed. In the same year, large-scale evangelism began through yard camps. Hundreds of children, teenagers and young people participated for the first time in a children's yard camp in Stepanavan, organized jointly by the AMAA and the French organization "Hope for Armenia."

The first Evangelical Church of Armenia building in the Homeland was built in Stepanavan in 1998. The new church building created possibilities for Sunday worship services and Christian Education programs to become more widespread.

"There were so many children that we did the children's programs in three shifts on Sundays – at 10:00 am, 12:00 noon and 4:00 pm. The number of teenagers reached 80 and there were more than 60 young people," says Arminé Arevjanyan, former head of the Christian Education Department of the Evangelical Church of Armenia in Stepanavan, who served for many years.

The scope of the Stepanavan Church programs also included the nearby villages. "In addition to the services of our Church in Stepanavan, we visited 13 villages," says Arminé and Tsoliné Mikayelyan, who served the Stepanavan Church for many years. They remember: "Programs were mainly for children and adolescents, but often there were so many parents accompanying them, that certain Bible studies were conducted for them as well. In some villages, services were also provided for groups of adults."

Since its revival in Stepanavan, four pastors have served the Church - Ara Ochinyan (1993-2006), Khachatur Khachatryan (December 2007-2020), Gevorg Gasparyan (December –April 2020) and Hrant Badalyan (April 30, 2021 to present). They have done their best to keep the Gospel transmission chain intact. Trying not to lose its initial enthusiasm over time, the Church continues its mission and has raised a generation of pastors and faithful servants, who continue to serve God through the Evangelical Church of Armenia in different parts of the Homeland.

Speaking about the current services of the Church, Rev. Badalyan says: "Church services are held throughout the week – Sunday School, adolescent and youth groups, Women's and Men's Bible studies, weekly prayer meetings, preparatory classes and Sunday Worship services. There are almost 50 children in the



Evangelical Church of Armenia in Stepanavan.



Easter Presentation at Stepanavan Church.

Church. The number of teenagers is about 15-20 and the number of youths is 10. There are 10-12 students in the preparatory classes. Our vision and goal for the Church is to spread the Word of God, be salt and light in the region, be a good witness, and stay steadfast in our mission, so that when people see us, they will know that this is the House of God. Here, in our Heavenly Father's house, His children will rise, and new servants will come out. We thank God, we pray for this Church, and of course we act and plan under His guidance to achieve our goals."

The words spoken by Rev. Dr. Movses Janbazian at the dedication of the Evangelical Church of Armenia in Stepanavan, emphasizing the purpose of the funding of the Church, is still practically manifested in all Church services, remembering to preach the Word and bring glory to God. □

(Translated from Eastern Armenian by Louisa Janbazian)



Stepanavan Church young adults.



Stepanavan Church Sunday morning worship service.



He Leadeth Me

By Rev. Joanne Gulezian Hartunian*

“Hello,” the woman on the other end of the phone said, “This is Linda from the Department of Children and Families. I understand you are Armenian.” “How may I help you?” I asked. It was then I learned there was a child of Armenian heritage available for placement. “Reverend, can you take her for two months?” “I’m sorry, no,” I said. I was a busy grandmother, wife, daughter, and Chaplain at the Tabernacle at the Craigville Retreat Center and I didn’t want to take on additional responsibilities. Linda called back three times, each time I said no. I felt like Peter who remembered the words of the Lord, “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.”

Then my husband Nelson asked to review her file and lo and behold a name appeared that he recognized. Nelson’s college mentor was her great grandfather. This professor was well known to our children in the tales Nelson would tell of his college days. This professor helped shape Nelson’s passion for science and exploration into the unknown. The connection was uncanny. When we told our three children, they couldn’t believe it! “Dad! This is the man we always heard about?” they roared in exclamation. Yes, indeed, he was. That night, Nelson woke me from a sound sleep. “We have to take her,” he said. “Why?” I questioned. “It might be our purpose,” he stated with sincere conviction.

I thought we were living our purpose! He kept the home fires burning and supported my call to ministry in Belmont, Troy, Armenia, and Cape Cod. My ministry of 50 years wasn’t enough? Leading two medical mission trips to Armenia to give AMAA families free eye exams, free eyeglasses, new clothing and boots wasn’t enough? Bringing aid to AMAA’s most vulnerable areas wasn’t our purpose? Working in Armenia for 12 years funded through the US Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs wasn’t enough? Not all of this even while raising three children? Evidently not.

“We have a grandson her age! We’re too old,” I justified. Ah, I heard those words before, too, in scripture. Age doesn’t matter to God. And I don’t believe in coincidence. Nelson and I prayed to make the right decision. If we were going to do this, I wanted to accept everything that came along with it. It was a big commitment and responsibility not to be taken lightly.

I believe things are ‘meant to be.’ “Jagadakis (ճադակիս).” How else can we explain that an Armenian child born in the south made her way to Cape Cod; Nelson and I made our way from Boston to Cape Cod, and we found ourselves at the same time and place; and, that her great grandfather had an impact on Nelson’s academic career 55 years ago!

And so it came to pass, we said, yes! But, not for two months. Forever. It was meant to be. The day she arrived, she was delivered to our door. Before we brought her in the house, we adorned her with flowers and held a Prayer Service of Blessing. We cut a ribbon in front of our door as a symbol of a new life for all of us and as a symbol of the entry into a new world for all of us. We acknowledged that she was a gift from God, unexpected, but wanted. “For thus saith the Lord who created thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.”

She wanted an Armenian name, so our children suggested names. My eldest son chose Yeranig and she liked it! “That’s it, Yeranig!”

Last Christmas Yeranig wanted her DNA analyzed by one of those genealogy companies. “I really want to know who I am,” she begged. “But you already know; we already know,” I tried to rationalize. “No, but I really want to know,” she insisted. During COVID-19 we closed the dark nights with singing hymns in Armenian; our grace before meals, the familiar Armenian Protestant mealtime prayer. She took Zoom Armenian language lessons from Yerevan and attended Camp Arev in California electronically. I said, “You don’t need a DNA test, your soul is Armenian.”

I finally gave in. Often with a teenager the path of less resistance is to give in on the little things. “You have to be prepared to find out things you may not want to know. Are you OK with that?” I questioned. “Sure,” she piqued, the dismissive word in a teen’s vocabulary. “Ok,” I surrendered. Before she put the DNA sample in the mail, we prayed. The words to the hymn resounded in my mind “He leadeth me, He leadeth me, by His own hand, He leadeth me.” They were the words written in my heart.

I didn’t know she checked off the box that would share the names of people with DNA matches to her.

When the results came, I heard her squeal! In large bold words I read my maiden name! We tried unsuccessfully to contact this person with whom she shares DNA and my maiden name; but according to the DNA company she no longer wished to be contacted. I contacted all my relatives on my father’s side, but no one knew this person. It didn’t matter.

Yeranig is our heaven-sent child who is also biologically connected on my paternal side. I cannot explain how this came to be; but neither can I explain the Virgin Birth; the birth of John and Baptist or Isaac; nor the miracles of Jesus, or His resurrection. I don’t question them. I stand on faith alone that this is true.

I tell Yeranig, “We didn’t find you in the water among the reeds in a basket, but you were meant to come to us.” I stand on faith alone that this is true.

We cannot explain the mysteries of faith; we are asked only to participate in them. Some things cannot be explained; and maybe should not be. Just because we are taken by surprise, doesn’t mean that God is. Amen. □



* Rev. Joanne Gulezian Hartunian is Chaplain of the Craigville Tabernacle, Craigville Retreat Center, Nantucket Sound, Cape Cod, MA and is a Trustee of the Osterville United Methodist Church.

Hail to the Third Republic of Armenia on its 30th Anniversary



By Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian

September 21, 2021 is the 30th Anniversary of the Third Republic of Armenia. The present state of Armenia is the resumption of the preceding two republics. In the years 1918-1920, statehood was regained with the creation of the first independent Armenian state since 1375. A small, landlocked, poor remnant of historical Armenia, devoid of natural resources, a land of refugees and epidemics, this First Republic became the nucleus of the present-day Armenia.

The close alliance of Turkey and Bolshevik Russia in the early 1920s led to the collapse of the First Republic. Turkey with its invading force, and the Red Army, aided by local communist sympathizers, advanced into Armenia on November 29, 1920 and set up a Soviet regime which lasted from 1920 to 1991. This period is known as the era of the Second Armenian Republic.

Present-day Armenia, the Third Republic, is just a tiny part of historic Armenia. Its size is 29,800 square kilometers, or 11,506 square miles, and is situated in the south Caucasus, or Transcaucasia. It is bounded on the north by Georgia, on the east by Azerbaijan, on the south by Iran, and on the west by Turkey and the Azerbaijan enclave of Nakhichevan.

Historic Armenia, at its height of power (1st century B.C.) stretched from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. It had an area of about 240,000 square miles. The Third Republic represents only 4.8 percent of historic Armenia and is only one-sixth of the Armenian territories delineated by the Treaty of Sevres by President Woodrow Wilson. Only 30 percent of the Armenian people live in Armenia, while the rest live in the Diaspora.

Looking back retrospectively, Armenia has been one of the cradles of human civilization. Historic Armenia is where the Garden of Eden was. The Bible informs us that Noah's Ark landed on the summit of Mount Ararat (Genesis 8:4).

Mount Ararat, which Armenians also call Massis, with its twin-peaks as the Greater and Lesser, stands sentinel over the heartland of Armenia. It has been a symbol of Armenian identity, and a source of inspiration for Armenian poets and artists throughout ages.

Yerevan, the capital city of Armenia, is one of the oldest cities in the world. It was founded in 782 B.C. The Armenians were there when mankind's earliest thinkers were formulating their thoughts in that cradle of civilization.

Located on one of the strategic crossroads of the ancient and medieval worlds, Armenia has been a bone of contention for many nations. It was occupied by the Medes, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, the Mongolians, the Turks and the Russians. Thus, throughout their history, the Armenians have lived in perpetual conflict between national survival and national subordination and have suffered cruelty at the hands of mightier powers. But despite their sufferings, not only have they managed to survive and thrive, but also have developed a rich and distinctive culture.

Speaking of the Third Republic, it must be stated that the past 30 years of independence have been a "mixed score." On the positive side, the Republic of Armenia has made every effort to consolidate its independence. Full membership was attained in international forums. Economic reforms were made to ensure a smooth transition from the old system to a free market economy. Land reforms were made. Reforms in industry, trade, banking, services and other spheres have been introduced.

On the negative side, there are some concerns about the free and democratic process in elections. There has been widespread corruption in the government. There is an increase in disparity on the economic and social levels. But the exodus of Armenians from Armenia presents an even more serious problem. Since 1991, approximately 2.5 million Armenians are reported to have emigrated abroad. With its population dwindling steadily, the question is whether the Armenian army will be large enough to defend its borders.

The most devastating problem presently, however, is the outcome of the Artsakh war, which was initiated on September 27, 2020 by Azerbaijan and Turkey against Artsakh and Armenia. Tragically, the 44-day war resulted in the deaths of thousands of soldiers, civilians and young Armenian conscripts, the destruction of numerous homes, schools, hospitals and institutions, and the transfer of seven districts of Artsakh to Azerbaijani control. These tragic events have disrupted many Armenian lives. Needless to say, many Armenians are confused, angry, depressed and frustrated. Some feel it is a hopeless situation.

Undoubtedly, the situation is serious, but not hopeless. Anyone who studies Armenian history will notice that hope has been one of the striking phenomena in the collective experience of the Armenian people. Throughout Armenian history, hope has manifested itself in political and national movements, exploding in a way that cannot be contained. Much of what we are taught by Armenian history supports this idea even in the face of unspeakable evil like the Armenian Genocide. Central to inextinguishable hope of this kind is the concept that the greatest traumas can be overcome. The story of the survival of the Armenian people is its chief testament. Just by being here, then, the Armenian people are evidence of hope.

After the catastrophic defeat in Artsakh, the Armenians must get up and look straight to the future with hope and confidence. At the same time, this event should give them wisdom to take a hard look at missed opportunities and plan for a better outcome in the future. All Armenians must stay vigilant. They must stay united to plan for the future. In the past, when they stood together they were able to achieve great things through unity.

Despite all of these difficulties, however, the Republic of Armenia has been growing and prospering the past 30 years and had become the actualization of the dream that a people without a land—and a land without a people—would be reunited.

We pray that God will protect the Republic of Armenia and keep our people filled with grace and reinforce with faith to live and work for the love and well-being of our Homeland. □



*** Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian** is the Executive Director of the Armenian Evangelical World Council.

In Spring 2021, AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian, accompanied by his wife Sona, took a mission trip to Armenia, Artsakh, Lebanon and Syria. What follows is a brief pictorial report on each of the countries visited.

ARMENIA

With snap elections set for June 20, 2021, our visit to Armenia from May 18-31, was a hard transition from the agony, despair and the mayhem of the post-war era to a potential postelection recovery, reconciliation and rebuilding. Whether the election results provided that hopeful expectation is too early to say. The existential threat to our Homeland is real. In the face of such a historically serious danger, Armenia and the Diaspora have to carve new strategies, develop new vision and new outlook, invest in knowledge, technology, innovation and character building, invigorate Christian faith and values and return to the source of all goodness and eternal love. AMAA has played a positive and constructive role and will continue to illuminate the minds, cleanse the hearts and advocate unity for a stronger and more faithful civil society.

The visit was a great opportunity to evaluate the mission, inspect new construction and renovation, engage and interact, gauge the spirits and bring HOPE to a society hard hit with the material, spiritual and psychological impact of the war.



At "Yeraploor" Military Pantheon paying respect to the memory of the brave heroes who were martyred in the name of their Fatherland (May 19).



Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School's Coordinating Committee meeting (May 19).



Meeting with the pastors of the Evangelical Church of Armenia (May 20).



At Vanadzor Shogh Center (May 21).



Visiting the recently constructed AMAA Center in Stepanavan.



Sunday morning worship service at the Evangelical Church of Armenia in Ijevan (May 23).



Visiting Khnadzakh, a border village in Syunik region, Armenia where AMAA implements a range of charitable programs and meeting with the village's representative in the regional government (May 27).



Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School Graduation (May 28).

Visiting the newly constructed Camp Sheen Shoghig Dining Hall in Hankavan (May 29).





Sunday morning worship service at the Evangelical Church of Armenia in Yerevan (May 30).

ARTSAKH

"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)

The road leading to Artsakh reflected the bittersweet nature of this first post-war visit to Artsakh. The sight of Azeri checkpoints on the dual roads leading to Shushi on the main Goris-Stepanakert highway countered the joy of the "Free and Sovereign Artsakh Welcomes You" sign that met us upon entering the Artsakh Republic. A combination of pain suffered from the cognitive realization of the consequences of the war interacted with the joy of watching an indigenous population return to a Homeland with a fervent spirit of ownership and an indestructible will to stay put at home.

Stepanakert was a bustling city with a first time experience of a traffic jam. Not only the City had regained most of its population but an influx of refugees from Shushi and Hatrut were accommodated in the City by the government. 'Hayastan' All Armenia Fund and other NGO plans were in progress to build thousands of housing units for resettled refugees. AMAA had repaired and restored over a dozen housing units in Stepanakert and was ready to embark on the reconstruction of many more housing units in Martuni and Martakert, which were destroyed in the war.

Illusive or not there is a spirit of comfort and security in the presence of a heavy Russian military presence in Artsakh. That sense of protection has given way to the local administration to focus on the social, economic, educational and other vital needs of the people.

AMAA's post-war advocacy and strategy of repopulating Artsakh and blazing preparation to welcome its children had worked. All AMAA educational centers, including the Shushi based institutional services which had moved to Stepanakert, were up and active by December 1, 2020.

I do not disparage the calamity nor minimize the pain. However, my outlook for the future is constructive and positive as I embrace the spirit of the Scripture quoted above. HOPE is in place in Artsakh.



At the AMAA Center in Stepanakert (May 26).



At the Evangelical Church of Armenia in Stepanakert (May 26).



Artsakh Republic President welcomes the AMAA Executive Director/CEO and AMAA Armenia and Artsakh staff (May 26).



The President of the National Assembly of Artsakh presents a Certificate of Appreciation to the AMAA's Executive Director/CEO (May 26).



At the Military Pantheon in Stepanakert paying respect to the memory of the brave heroes who were martyred in the name of their Fatherland (May 27).



The future site of the AMAA's Stepanakert KG.



At the AMAA's Yeprem and Zabel Basmajian KG in Askeran (May 27).



At the AMAA's Rev. Dr. Movses Janbazian KG in Martakert (May 27).



AMAA Executive Director/CEO visits the Arushian family, beneficiaries of "Empower an Artsakh Family" Program (May 27).

LEBANON

Despite many bright and stellar moments that stand out in our mission, the most painful chapter of my trip remains the sorrowful situation in Lebanon and its deepening crisis.

What will a collapse of Lebanon mean and what shape will it take are questions that exasperate our most fearful imagination.

Your daily news barrages are full of unimaginable pictures of how awful life has turned out to be.

How difficult earning a living has turned to be. How difficult securing a meal, even a loaf of bread has turned out to be.

Water, power, gasoline, medicine, and food are in diminishing returns every day.

August 4, 2020 was a horrific tragedy in the history of Lebanon.

But it does not have to be August 4 for Lebanon to suffer.

The struggle to survive is a steeper uphill battle every day.

AMAA and other good Samaritans have rebuilt and restored the material damages. In public institutions, walls are painted, glass is replaced and floors are shining.

But the toll is heavy on the psyche and disposition of the community. HOPE is a major victim.

Yet, HOPE is what the AMAA has been able to deliver. Emulating Christ on earth and thanks to your support, AMAA will remain faithful to continue its deliverance.

I was inspired by the will of the leadership to carry on the mission armed with hope, faith and love.



Zaven Khanjian with Haigazian University President Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian in the Board Room (June 1).



Zaven Khanjian with Dr. Antranig Dakessian, Director of Armenian Diaspora Research Center at Haigazian (June 1).



Meeting with UAECNE leadership (June 2).



Dedication of renovated UAECNE Headquarters (June 2).



Zaven Khanjian with Near East School of Theology Armenian students (June 2).



Zaven Khanjian with Dr. Yervant Kassouny (June 2).



An Evening of Appreciation at the Armenian Evangelical Shamlian Tatigian Secondary School of Nor Marash, Bourdj Hammoud (June 2).



Rev. Megrditch Karagoezian presents a special memento to AMAA Executive Director/CEO in gratitude for the consistent and particular care shown over the years (June 2).



Visit with CAHL Director Sebouh Terzian (June 2).



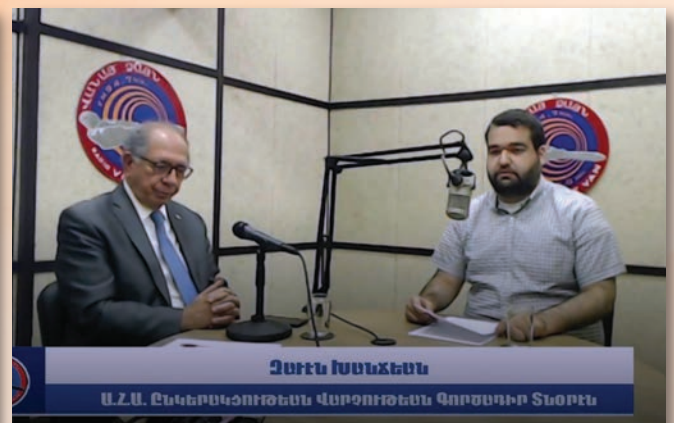
Visit with Maral Deirminjian, Principal of Central High School in Ashrafieh, and two students (June 2).



His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, receives AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian, accompanied by his wife Sona, Rev. Megrditch Karagoezian, President of the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East, and Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian, President of Haigazian University (June 12).



Executive Director/CEO visits the editorial offices of "Aztag Daily" Newspaper and met with Editor Shahe Kandaharian (June 12).



Radio Van of Beirut, Lebanon interviews AMAA Executive Director/CEO (June 12).



At the Armenian Evangelical Church and the Boarding Department of the Armenian Evangelical Secondary School of Anjar (June 12).

ALEPPO, SYRIA

Syria was the bright spot of my trip because of the vibrancy we witnessed which led to my positive outlook for its future. Despite its continued dismemberment among the Turks, Kurds, Russia and the US, the central government controlled areas are peaceful, secure and enjoy the rule of law of an administration that cares for its people.

The Armenian Evangelical Churches and their multi-faceted educational, cultural, medical and social institutions enjoy a level of activity and vibrancy that is unmatched for a country which has seen a decade of devastating war. Sunday schools are the gauge of the future and the future is promising in the flickering eyes of hundreds of Sunday School children. Community life in general is on the same plateau. Much of that is God's grace and a result of the compassion and love you demonstrate through the mission of the AMAA and of other Good Samaritans.

On the other side of the coin, the underlying stress and suffering due to political unrest in the region, hyper-inflation and a barrage of sanctions imposed on the peaceful citizenry of the country result in economic havoc, poverty and pain.

Rev. Dr. Haroutune Selimian has carved a historic and respectable image of himself in Syria. Rev. Selimian is a visionary, courageous, innovative and compassionate. His organizational skills, grasp of technology and imagination enable him to be a multitasking harbinger. He is loved by his flock and beyond and reaches out to all. His caring spirit goes a long way in the healing process. We should fervently continue to fill the vacuum by offering our prayers, injecting HOPE and material Love.



Armenian Evangelical Bethel School students welcome Zaven and Sona Khanjian (June 3).



A special introductory meeting at "Shirajian" Hall of the Armenian Evangelical Bethel Church (June 4).



A special Reception in honor of Zaven and Sona Khanjian at Bethel Church with clergy and community leaders (June 5).



Presentation of Zaven Khanjian's books held at Bethel Church (June 6).



The Trustees of the Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel Church present a symbolic gift following a joint worship service (June 6).



Rev. Dr. Haroutune Selimian presents a silver plaque to Zaven Khanjian (June 7).



Public Lecture at Bethel Church (June 7).



Meeting with Bishop Masis Zobuyan (June 7).



At Bethel Polyclinic (June 7).



At Howard Karageozian Foundation Center (June 7).



At the Jinishian Memorial Program Center (June 7).



Visit with Rev. Bchara Moussa Oghli at Church of Christ (June 7).



Cultural event at Bethel Church (June 7).



Cultural event at Bethel Church (June 7).



Meeting with the Governor of Aleppo, Mr. Huseyn Diab (June 8).



Meeting with the representatives of the Armenian Evangelical Churches and Institutions (June 8).



At the AGBU's Lazar Najarian Calouste Gulbenkian Armenian Central High School (June 9).



Visit with Pastor Simon Der Sahagian at Armenian Evangelical Martyrs Church (June 9).



Mr. Khanjian visits a family in Aleppo. After hearing about their health and financial difficulties, Mr. Khanjian gives them a glimpse of light and hope promising to follow up on the family's plight. (June 9).



At the Prelacy of the Armenian Catholic Community of Aleppo (June 10).

AMAA Executive Director/CEO Attends a Farewell Reception Hosted by the Embassy of Armenia in US



L to R: Ambassador Varuzhan Nersesyan and AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian.

On Monday July 19, AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian attended a farewell reception in Washington D.C. hosted by the Embassy of Armenia to the United States for H.E. Ambassador Varuzhan Nersesyan and Mrs. Narine Malkhasyan.

As Ambassador, Mr. Nersesyan heads to London as Republic of Armenia's top diplomat in the United Kingdom. AMAA wishes him much success in his new position. □



Lusine Mnatsakanyan:

First Student from Avedisian School to Graduate from AUA in Yerevan, Armenia

By Jane Wenning, AMAA Staff

Another dream recently came true for Edward Avedisian, benefactor and founder of the AMAA's Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School in Yerevan, Armenia and AMAA Board member. His first dream, founding a no-tuition school for children in Yerevan, came true with the opening of the Avedisian School in 1998. The second dream was also in 1998 when Mr. Avedisian first began talking with the late Dr. Mihran Agbabian, founding President of the American University of Armenia (AUA) in Yerevan, about establishing an undergraduate program at AUA. Mr. Avedisian felt that putting up the PAB and expanding the tuition free Avedisian School from grade school to K-12 would make it possible for any deserving Armenian student to receive an education from kindergarten through AUA without the burden of tuition. The AUA introduced its undergraduate program in 2013.

The first student to fulfill Mr. Avedisian's two dreams was Lusine Mnatsakanyan from Avedisian School who graduated summa cum laude from AUA in June 2021 with a degree in General Business. A few days later she was awarded an internship with KPMG, one of the world's Big 5 auditing companies and also applied to the AUA's Master of Science Management program which she will attend on a scholarship sponsored by Mr. Avedisian.

During a recent email exchange between Lusine and Mr. Avedisian, Lusine thanked him for the chance to be a student at the Avedisian School and AUA. "These two experiences have been life changing for me, and without your generous support I would not be the person I am today. Thank you and your wife Pam so much for being role models, for supporting my education and for taking care of our country. I will forever be grateful to you as you gave me the greatest gift of all time – an education."

Lusine, who also did two exchange programs while studying, – one at Wake Forest University in North Carolina and the other one at the University of Cadiz in Spain – has an ultimate goal of teaching high school and college students about innovation and entrepreneurship and to open an NGO supporting Armenian startups and technology companies. "Making Armenia economically strong is my lifelong dream and I hope to make a small contribution to it," said Lusine.

"Pam and I were extremely disappointed in not being able to be in Armenia for your graduation from AUA," expressed Mr. Avedisian to Lusine. "We are disappointed not only because of the person you are, but also because you are making history. Crossing the stage to receive your diploma made all of this dream come true after some 20 plus years. We are quite proud of all you have accomplished during your four years at AUA, all the while not losing sight of the Avedisian School and others deserving of your many talents and abilities together with your concern for others. It is an honor, not only for you, but for your family, the Avedisian School, AUA and Armenia. We congratulate you most heartily and look forward to following your future endeavors."

"The AMAA also wishes to congratulate Lusine on her wonderful achievements," said Zaven Khanjian, Executive Director/CEO of the AMAA which established the Avedisian School in 1998 and the new award-winning "Green" School building in 2014. "She is a shining example of the students we have at and graduate from the AMAA's Avedisian School. We are very proud of the relationship that has been established with the AUA that allows exceptional students like Lusine to continue their education at the college level." □



L to R: Melanya Geghamyan, Principal of Avedisian School, Lusine Mnatsakanyan and Professor Karin Markides, President of AUA.

Armenian Memorial Church of Watertown, MA Donates \$52,000 to AMAA's All for Artsakh Campaign

On June 6, 2021, as a part of AMAA Sunday at the Armenian Memorial Church of Watertown, MA, Armenian Missionary Association of America's Board members were presented with a check from the AMC for \$52,000 specifically designated for the All for Artsakh Campaign. The donation contains funds contributed by church family and friends totaling \$27,000 plus a match of \$25,000 provided by the AMC.

AMC fundraising for the All for Artsakh Campaign began in February 2021 and is targeted to be completed by September 2021. However, the response was so positive that the AMC was able to provide a first check of \$52,000 to the AMAA within just four months. AMC will continue to gratefully accept additional contributions until September to give to the AMAA at that time. During the June 6th Sunday Service, the AMAA showed a video of many ongoing humanitarian projects focused on children and their families being performed in Artsakh. AMC is extremely happy to partner with the AMAA to provide this much needed aid and gives thanks to God and the donors for their generous support. □



Steve Sabounjian (center), Facilitator of the AMC-AMAA All for Artsakh Campaign, and Rev. Dr. Avedis Boynerian present a \$52,000 check to AMAA Board members Edward Avedisian, Phyllis Dohanian and Susan Adamian Covo.

COOKING FOR A CAUSE Raises Funds for AMAA's Post-War Humanitarian Efforts

Alex Simonian, a 16-year-old Junior at Brentwood High School in Los Angeles, CA, is an honors student, basketball player, pianist and a fourth generation Armenian American passionate about his heritage.

His maternal great grandparents, Edward and Gloria Medzian, were active supporters of the AMAA during their lifetimes. Gloria was one of the founders of the women's chapter in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1970. The ladies held monthly luncheons at their homes to raise money for various AMAA projects. Gloria's daughter, Barbara Medzian (Alex's grandmother), assisted her in hosting these events. And, passing their support through the generations, Barbara's daughter, Nicole and her son-in-law Andrew, continued to support AMAA by sponsoring orphans every year and attending annual luncheons where Alex and his sister, Ashley, participated in the AMAA children's fashion show. Both Alex and Ashley now individually have sponsored orphans and cherish letters they have received from Armenia.

In 2020, Alex started the COOKING FOR A CAUSE project on his own to raise funds for AMAA's post-war humanitarian efforts.

"COOKING FOR A CAUSE is a project I started when my family and I began sheltering at home in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic," said Alex. "The routine of spending 24 hours a day inside our house in Los Angeles included cooking all of our own meals at home as well. I have always enjoyed food and cooking. Since I could no longer order my favorite foods at my favorite restaurants, I learned to make my favorite restaurant recipes at home instead.

"When war broke out in Artsakh, I wanted to find a way to help the Armenian children who have been affected. So, I decided to turn my passion for cooking into a philanthropic venture.

"COOKING FOR A CAUSE is a cookbook that shares my favorite recipes with the world. All proceeds go to the AMAA's Post-War Humanitarian Efforts in Artsakh. People from across America have purchased the book. Revenue from those sales have allowed me to sponsor three tablets for children to help their educational and psychological recovery from the war as well as to sponsor a child through the AMAA. I plan to increase my sponsorship number as sales continue in the future.

"Our family had plans to visit Armenia last summer, but the pandemic forced us to cancel that trip. I am happy that I was able to do a little bit through the Cookbook to help the children of Armenia through the AMAA while I wait to visit our Homeland as soon as the pandemic is over." □



HAIGAZIAN UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEET VIA ZOOM



The Haigazian University Board of Trustees held its Spring 2021 Meeting via Zoom on Saturday, May 22 and received the reports of the Board Committees, the President and the various departments with much appreciation.

The Board renewed its commitment toward the ongoing welfare of Haigazian and sent its sincere greetings to the Faculty, Staff and Students of HU in these challenging times.

Established in 1955, the Haigazian University of Beirut, Lebanon is the only institute of higher education in the Armenian Diaspora. □

AMAA NEAR EAST COMMITTEE AND UAECNE ANNUAL MEETING



On Thursday, May 20 the AMAA/UAECNE (Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East) Annual Meeting was held online via Zoom with the participation of AMAA leadership with its Near East Committee members and UAECNE leadership with its President and Central Committee members. During the meeting updates and illustrated reports were presented regarding the UAECNE churches, schools and ministries including AMAA supported projects. It was a time of gratitude, fellowship and information sharing, but also an opportunity to renew the joint commitment to serve with vision, wisdom and courage despite all the challenges. □

Peace-Loving Armenians

By **Areni Haroutunian**, AMAA 2021 James G. Jameson Essay Contest Winner, High School Level

What does it mean to forgive? When people choose to forgive, should they brush aside all feelings of sorrow, pain, regret and mourning? The Armenian race's ancient history is riddled with centuries of pain and sorrow and death, most recently inflicted by the Turks and Azeris. When Armenians choose to forgive them, all must take heed not to belittle the losses and betray the millions of innocent lives who wanted nothing more than to enjoy the fruits of life on this green earth. Armenians have tried to resolve their tragic past in order to achieve peace and contentment, in which, finally, they are not constantly haunted by ghosts of their heartbreaking past. Within that context, they must not allow the murderous deaths of millions of Armenians at the hands of the Turks to be in vain. The Turks' contemptuous and unapologetic actions have bred complacency among many Armenians to overlook the murders without realizing that certain steps must be taken to make the Turks and Azeris answer for their crimes. Horrifically shocking criminal atrocities, such as the Armenian massacres, that are prematurely forgiven obstruct truth and justice and the ability to process grief and sorrow. Murder of the innocent leaves a cold, ruthless, cavalier emptiness in the mind and heart and soul and a message of injustice that never leaves. What does it mean when one immediately and easily forgives a shameful crime? Armenians must properly grieve the destruction of lives, nation and culture, while ensuring that the Turks answer for what they have done by way of reparations for war crimes and national decimation committed against an ancient and peace-loving race as the Armenians.

Furthermore, when Turks and Azeris fails to express apology after all this time and continue to slaughter Armenians, they not only prevent Armenians meaningful closure, but amplify their past monstrosities. Christians are urged to love and pray for their enemies. Sometimes we are urged to pray more for our enemies than we do for our loved ones. However, every Armenian must realize that the authors of the Genocide and their blood-hungry allies—the Azeris—will seize any opportunity to spill more Armenian blood. They will continue to murder and pillage with reckless abandon while Armenian families weep in sorrow. This is precisely why Armenians must take every action to make the blood-thirsty Turks and Azeris accountable for their atrocities.

Lately, overly eager Armenian-Turkish reconciliation has been a cause for concern. There has been a pervasive movement to conduct meetings between Armenian and Turkish intellectuals and students to launch a non-existent friendship between Armenians and Turks.

To this end, there have been attempts to produce films and to issue joint publications toward achieving peace. Both sides should, in theory, forgive each other and open new pages of accord. The last thing Armenians would want, however, is to return to their Homeland only to find it invaded and overrun by Turks and Azeris.



Additionally, genocide denial may serve a bigger political agenda for some world powers. Certain nations at times fear that recognizing the Armenian Genocide would get them on the "bad side" of Turkey. Turkey conducts a lot of trade with many nations in the world. In order to appease the Turkish regime, some governments have been very slow to recognize the Genocide as a historical fact. These nations of appeasement can erode truth and give way to the erasure of Armenian rights from the minds of future generations. We should emphasize the fact that there are certain unpatriotic Armenian Christians who have already penetrated the borders of the Armenian Republic, as well as various communities of the Armenian Diaspora. The unpatriotic Armenians are trying to pursue dark political purposes by expending large amounts of a campaign for personal gain. By agreeing to label the Genocide not as a genocide but just as the "Armenian Question" or "Armenian Issue," in one of their insidious devices to push toward premature forgiveness of the Turks and to enable payouts from Turkish politicians and rich nationalists.

Ultimately, the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide is presented to the Armenian public as the first step for the solution of Armenia's problems as they relate to receiving reparations from Turkey. Foreign world powers have extended their reach into matters concerning the liberation of the Armenian-occupied lands. What do Armenians understand by the term "Armenian Cause"? For many Armenians, the term is understood

to mean the international and Turkish recognition of the Armenian Genocide only. For many Armenians, this recognition alone is not enough. An important matter needs to be clarified. When Turkish higher authorities present an apology and reparations for cultural and geographical destruction to the Armenians, only then is it worth thinking of any possibility of true forgiveness.

It would also be ideal to have the former Western Armenians land of Old Armenia returned to the Armenians, but there is little chance of this happening. To speak about forgiving the Turks is too early. The terrible crimes that their forefathers perpetrated against the Armenians cannot be shrugged off. The Turks are denying in an ugly manner what they have done to the Armenians. Moreover, they are forging false narratives and perverting historical facts by trying to present to the world the opposite of reality. The Turks are displaying Armenians to the international public as conspirators/aggressors. The Turks tried to play victim, exactly as their kinsmen Azeris are doing. Why hasten the process of unjustly forgiving criminals? Without the repentance of the guilty and without proper compensation to the Armenians, truth is lost in a fabrication of lies. In a perfect world, the Turks would base their apology upon justice and common sense; they would base their apology upon the principle that might doesn't always make right.

Compensation is one of the most important issues in the Armenian Cause to the victims of the Armenian Genocide and the more recent war over Artsakh. Without compensation in the form of reparations, there will be no justice.

As peace-loving Armenians, we must not only understand our world but also know how to live within it. We need to draw closer to God than ever before. Let us establish ourselves in His

World. Let us look to Him for wisdom and discernment to navigate these uncertain times. We must accept His son Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior to send the Holy Spirit to give us the wisdom and knowledge we need to understand, truly, His Commandments by accepting and applying them in our daily lives. We need to strengthen our faith by trusting and believing in Him through unconditional surrender. We must step into His light to dispel the darkness and to empower our freedom for us to be guided to the righteous path to His Salvation.

Today, most of the world, except Turkey and its allies, recognize the Armenian Genocide. The Armenian Genocide should be recognized as a crime. It was never a conflict, tragedy, or disaster, but an International Crime that demands justice. Truth cannot be denied, and everything will appear in its reality, sooner or later, as it is written in the Holy Bible.

"So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known." Matthew 10:26. □

CORRECTION

April/May/June 2021 AMAA News

Page 30 – In the article Welcoming President Joe Biden's Statement, first paragraph fourth line should read ... [recognizing the atrocities and calling the massacres of one and a half million Armenians as Genocide](#).

The Digital copy of the AMAA News posted on our website reflects the correction. [We apologize for the error!](#)



AMAA Awards Scholarships to Needy and Deserving Students

The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) awarded \$212,450.00 in direct scholarship grants to 84 worthy students for the academic year 2021-2022 attending colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. In addition, \$32,000 more was assigned for qualified university students in Armenia.

For over 50 years, the AMAA has helped thousands of college students with scholarships, thus helping them prepare for the future and relieving the financial burden that makes it harder to focus on their work. Moreover, since its founding, AMAA has supported the education of tens of thousands of Armenian students at all levels, in the Near East, Europe, Continental US and Armenia. The AMAA also provides generous and abundant financial aid to schools and institutions of higher education in the Near East, including Haigazian University and the Near East School of Theology in Beirut.

The scholarships granted this year were provided from several AMAA scholarship funds established over the years to help students in need. Students may request applications from AMAA Headquarters in Paramus, NJ beginning in January of each year. The deadline to submit applications for the 2022-2023 academic year is May 1, 2022. □

Երեխաներու եւ Երիտասարդներու Ծրագիրներու Դրական Ազդեցութիւնը Սուրիոյ մէջ

...Քանի որ իմ այս եղբայրներէն ամենէն պզտիկներէն մէկուն ըրիք, ինծի ըրիք: Մատթ. 40. 25

Վեր. Դոկտ. Յարութիւն Սելիմեան*

Քրիստոնէայ անհատին համար յոյսը նման է օդին, որ կը շնչէ: Երբ քրիստոնէան այս հեռանկարը կորսնցնէ, անոր կեանքը անշարժ կը դառնայ:

2011-ի գարնան Սուրիոյ մէջ բռնկած ահաբեկչական գործողութիւնները կարճ ժամանակի մէջ վերածուեցան լայնատարած պատերազմի, ետեւ ետեւի ընդգրկեցին երկրին զանազան գաւառները՝ ահաբեկչութեան թիրախ դարձնելով խաղաղ բնակչութիւնը, սակայն ժողովուրդը անսալով Բարձրեային եւ շնորհիւ համայնքներու յոյս ներշնչող ծրագիրներուն կրցաւ գոյատեւել:

Սուրիոյ աւերիչ պատերազմին ազդեցութիւնը իր խոր հետքը թողուց մարդկային զանազան խաւերուն վրայ: Ասպնջական Սուրիան, որ տասնամեակներէ ի վեր եռացող տարածաշրջանի մը անդորր ովասիսը կը սեպուէր, դարձաւ համաշխարհային քաղաքական ուժերու միջեւ կռուախնձոր՝ պատերազմի դաշտի վերածուելով: Սուրիոյ հայութիւնը, ինչպէս ամբողջ Սուրիոյ ժողովուրդը, ծանր կորուստներ կրեց պատերազմին հետեւանքով:

Սուրիահայ համայնքը յատկանշող կարեւորագոյն իւրայատկութիւնը անոր ընկերային կեանքն է:

Սուրիոյ պատերազմի ընթացքին Նիւթական եւ մարդկային վնասներուն կողքին բացասական ազդեցութիւն կրեց նաեւ ընկերային կեանքը, յատկապէս մանուկներուն ու երիտասարդութեան համար:

Պատերազմի թոհ ու բոհին հետքերը մեղմացնելու, անհատական արժեհամակարգերը խարխաբումի չենթարկելու եւ բարոյապէս կայուն դրուածքի մէջ պահելու միտումով մանուկներուն եւ երիտասարդներուն ուղղուած ծրագիրներ մշակուեցան, որոնք իրենց դրական ներդրումով ակնառու դերակատարութիւն ունեցան անոնց հոգեմտաւոր աշխարհին մէջ:

Այս ծիրին մէջ Սուրիոյ Հայ Աւետարանական համայնքը, ազգին անբաժան մէկ մասը ըլլալով ժողովուրդին նեցուկ կանգնեցաւ՝ դիմագրաւելու համար անսախատեսելի եւ ահարկու դժուարութիւնները:

Ժողովուրդին՝ եւ յատկապէս փոքրերուն եւ երիտասարդներուն դժուարին պայմաններուն մէջ նեցուկ կանգնիլ առաջնահերթութիւն սեպելով, ամէն ջանք ի գործ դրուեցաւ կենսական պէտքեր ապահովելու, որպէսզի մարդիկ յոյսը չկորսնցնեն ներկայի ու ապագայի նկատմամբ:

Օրն ի բուն, յոյս ներշնչելն ու սերմանելը խօսքի սահմաններուն մէջ պիտի չի մնար, հապա սերմը, հունտը եւ կեանքի կենսունակութիւնը ապահովող եւ երաշխաւորող գործօնները հայթայթելը եղաւ առաջնային տառապեալ ու բազմաչարչար ժողովուրդին՝ փոքրերուն եւ երիտասարդներուն:

Հալէպահայ գաղութի աւելի քան 1500 ընտանիքներ մշտական խնամքի ու հոգածութեան կեդրոն դարձան: Տրամադրուած նպաստները բազմատեսակ էին, ինչպիսին են՝ սննդեղէն, Նիւթական, ջուրի մատակարարում եւ կենցաղային՝ տնական վարձքերու ապահովում, բժշկական, մաքրողական եւ այլազան պէտքեր:

Այս բոլորին կողքին, անտարակոյս, ուշադրութեան հսկողութեան տակ էին յատկապէս մանուկներն ու երիտասարդները: Պատերազմի հետեւանքով սերունդ մը զրկուեցաւ անհոգ ու զուարթ կեանքէ, ապրեցաւ վախի, ցուրտի ու խաւարի, մահուան սարսափի ու այլ տարրական զրկանքներու մէջ:

Պատերազմը նաեւ կորստուած, չապրուած մանկութիւն է: Երեխաներ են, որոնք իրենց վտիտ ուսերուն շալկեցին պատերազմի ամբողջ ծանրութիւնն ու դաժանութիւնը: Ծատեր կորսնցուցին տուն-տեղ, դարձան անօթեւան: Ուրիշներ ապրեցան պատերազմին սարսափելի արիաւիրքը, ներկայ եղան մահուան անկուշտ խրախճանքին, կորսնցուցին ընտանիքի անդամներ՝ հայր, մայր, երբեմն երկուքը եւ դարձան որբ ու անպաշտպան: Ծատ-շատեր դարձան գաղթական, բաժնուեցան իրենց հարազատներէն, դասընկերներէն, քաղաքէն, քաղաքացիներէն եւ այն ապահով միջավայրէն, որ անհոգ մանկութիւն մը պիտի պարգեւէր իրենց: Կան նաեւ անոնք, որոնք զրկուեցան կրթութեան, խնամքի եւ առողջապահութեան տարրական իրաւունքներէն, ընկերային-հոգեբանական ամէն ձեւի աջակցութենէ, ինչ որ մարդկային բնական զարգացում մը պիտի ապահովէր իրենց:

Մանուկներուն, ինչպէս նաեւ երիտասարդներուն կարիքներուն հասնիլը համազգային պարտաւորութիւն մը եղաւ, որպէսզի իւրաքանչիւր մանուկ օր առաջ թօթափէ վիշտի ու կարեկցութեան ամօթը եւ ապրի արժանապատիւ կեանքով ու մանկութեամբ, իր բոլոր երազները իրականութիւն դարձնելու անպարտելի կամքով:

Համայնքէն ներս նաեւ երիտասարդները իրենց նկատառելի թիւով եւ այլ միջավայրերու մէջ ներգրաւուածու-

Արժանապատուութեան Հարց Է Ամէն Օր Օգոստոս 4 Է Լիբանանի Մէջ

Պարտադիր չէ Օգոստոս 4 մը, որ Լիբանան տառապի:
Մէկուկէս տարի է, որ Լիբանան կը շարունակէ կանգնիլ տխուր իրավիճակի մը եւ խորացող տնտեսական, ֆինանսական եւ քաղաքական ճգնաժամի մը առջեւ: Համաշխարհային դրամատան տուեալներով, այս իրավիճակը սարսափելի է եւ կրնայ դասուիլ 1800 թուականներու կէսերէն ի վեր աշխարհի երեք ամենավատ ճգնաժամերէն մէկը:
Ի՞նչ պիտի նշանակէ փլուզում եւ ի՞նչ ձեւ պիտի ունենայ այդ, հարցեր են, որոնք կը սաստկացնեն մեր ամենասարսափելի երեւակայութիւնը:
Երկարատեւ տառապանքի եւ հորիզոնի վրայ առանց տեսանելի աւարտի, անհատներ, ընտանիքներ, կրթական հաստատութիւններ եւ առեւտրական կեդրոններ կը պայքարին գոյատեւելու: Օրերը կը սպառնան դեղորայքի, վառելանիւթի, առանց չափազանցութեան նոյնիսկ աղբամաններու մէջ պեղուած սնունդի եւ այլ տարրական կարիքներու որոնումով, որոնք սակաւ են եւ օրէ օր աւելի անհնար գտնել: Առաւել, ելեկտրական հոսանքի ամէնօրեայ անջատում, որոնք կը տեւեն ժամեր:
2020-ի Աւետարանչականի շտապ օգնութիւնը կը շարունակէ օրհնութիւն դառնալ մեր ժողովուրդի զանազան խաւերուն մէջ մինչեւ այսօր՝ Մերձաւոր Արեւելքի Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիներու Միութեան, Պէյրութի եւ Հալէպի կրթական խորհուրդներու եւ Ընկերային Ծառայութեան Յանձնախումբերու համագործակցութեամբ:
Կարիքը սակայն անսպառ է:
Մեծագոյն զօրը կը շարունակէ մնալ Յոյսը կամ Յոյսի խաւարումը:
Արժանապատուութեան հարց է:
Սփիւռքահայու արժանապատուութեան կենդանութեան:
Կարելի՞ է զոհաբերել Լիբանանահայու արժանապատուութիւնը:
Սփիւռքն ու Հայրենիքը հարկ է որ անյապաղ ստեղծեն արտակարգ վիճակի մէջ գտնուող Սփիւռքահայ գաղութներու անվտանգութեան, ապահովութեան եւ տուն դարձը սերտող եւ մշակող ռազմավարութիւն մը:
Բաւ է արտակարգ վիճակի մէջ գտնուող Սփիւռքեան գաղութներու խաչելութիւնն ու մարտիրոսացումը:
Մինչ այդ ամէն միջոց եւ ծրագիր հարկ է որդեգրել այս ամենասարսափելի իրավիճակը փրկելու համար:
Գործենք ա՛յսօր: Ձեր նուիրատուութիւնները անյապաղ պիտի վերածուին Աստուածատուր օգնութեան եւ բաց պահեն գոյատեւման ուղին:
Կացութիւնը թաւազլոր կը շարունակէ վատթարանալ:
Յոյս ներշնչէ Լիբանանահայ եղբօրդ:
Արժանապատուութեան հարց է:



*** Զաւեն Խանճեան**
Գործադիր Տնօրէն
Է Ամերիկայի Հայ
Աւետարանչական
Ընկերակցութեան:



SYRIA

NEAR EAST CRISIS DEEPENS

LEBANON



A small country, roughly 2/3 the size of Connecticut, Lebanon's future remains in peril. A gateway to neighboring Syria, Lebanon is not only a crucial trading partner and an important source for humanitarian aid, but a beacon of education. Activity between these two countries has been limited by sanctions which tend to the economic and political fragility of the region. Newspaper headlines forecast structural systems (on numerous planes), are on the verge of collapsing -fuel and water shortages, power outages, lack of access to critically needed medicine, and the list continues...

AMAA continues to answer the call, but only with **YOUR** help! The impact of funds received will provide, actual and not just symbolic, relief, spiritual nourishment, educational support, physical sustenance, health care, social and cultural programs and provisions.

As the crisis deepens in the Near East, AMAA continues its support by:

- Home renovations
- Rent payment assistance
- Water bill assistance
- Food distribution
- Formula and diaper distribution for infants and toddlers
- Baby clothing and quality baby furniture distribution
- Fresh cooked meals program
- Bread packages provided by local bakery
- Psychotherapy to individuals who are experiencing post traumatic stress disorders
- Home-care hygiene program focused on the elderly who are bedridden
- Medical support for all in need: hospitalization with emergency or procedural surgeries; diagnostic tests; COVID-19 related lifesaving medical support
- Children and teen social programs
- Daily Vacation Bible Schools
- AMAA Life-Line remains in place for any individual(s) or families seeking to relocate and restart in the Homeland
- Special support for Union schools and Haigazian University to alleviate ongoing effects of non-payment of tuition
- Emergency relief bonuses to help supplement teachers' salaries



Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. Matthew 25:40

To make a donation, use the envelope or visit our website at amaa.org. You may also scan here to donate online today →





IN MEMORIAM: Rev. Dr. John Markarian



"The Armenian Evangelical Community has deep historical roots in the Middle East. One of those is called Haigazian University and I had the privilege of serving as its Founding President." **Rev. Dr. John Markarian (October 2020)**

Rev. Dr. John J. Markarian of West Pittston, PA, Founding President of Haigazian University of Beirut, Lebanon, passed away on June 29, 2021. He celebrated his 104th birthday on June 7.

Dr. Markarian was born in Windham, N.Y., a son of the late Rev. Jacob and Dora (Euth) Markarian. He was a graduate of Lafayette College and Princeton Divinity School. He later served on the faculty at Lafayette College. He was an ordained Presbyterian minister and earned a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Theology from Drew University.

Rev. Dr. Markarian was the Founding President of Haigazian University in Beirut, Lebanon, established in 1955. An account of his years there is relayed in his memoir, "The Thirsty Enemy." He and his wife, Inge, later moved to California and eventually to West Pittston where they resided for the last 34 years.

He leaves behind his wife, Inge, of 47 years; his daughter, Joanne Kubler, of Los Angeles; his grandson, Michael Kubler and his wife Kathryn, and his great-grandchildren, Gabriel and Ari, of Sydney, Australia.

A Service of Witness to the Resurrection and Celebration of the Life of Rev. Dr. Markarian was held on Sunday, July 25, 2021.

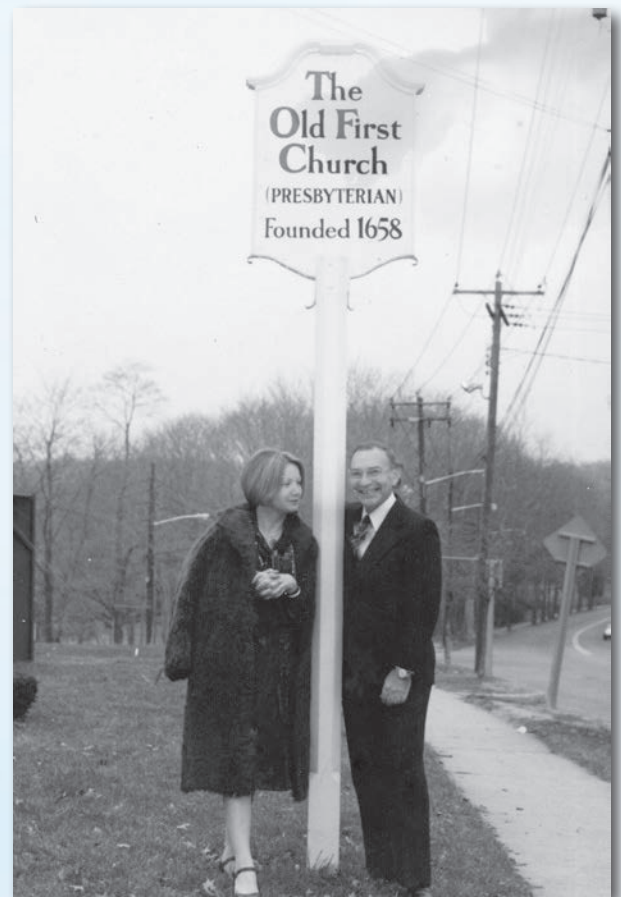
Memorial donations can be made to the AMAA to benefit Rev. Dr. John J. Markarian Scholarship Fund designated to Haigazian University in Beirut, Lebanon.

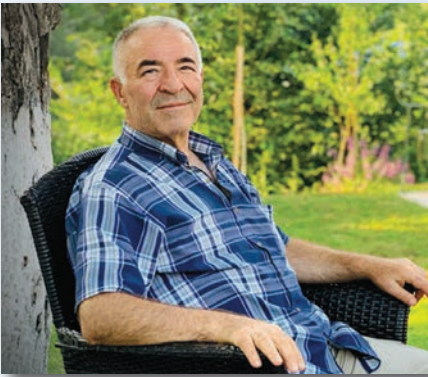


"Although Dr. Markarian has physically imparted from this earth, he remains a shining star in the field of higher education and the history of the Armenian Missionary Association of America. As thousands of Haigazian University students mourn his loss, we praise God for generations of Haigazian graduates

who have illuminated the skies of humanity and brilliantly served their respective communities around the globe," said Zaven Khanjian, AMAA Executive Director/CEO.

As we mourn the passing of Rev. Dr. Markarian we rejoice in his life and find consolation in the Hope of the Resurrection. □





Վեր. Համլետ Կյուրեղյանի Յիշատակին

«Պատվական Է Տիրոջ առջև Իր սրբերի մահը» Սաղմ. 116.15

2021թ.-ի հուլիսի 17-ի երեկոյան ՀԱԵ համայնքը ցավով լսեց երեց հովիվ, վեր. Համլետ Կյուրեղյանի մահվան բոթը:

Վերապատվելի Համլետ Գևորգի Կյուրեղյանը ծնվել է 1954 թվականին, Վրաստանի Գանձա գյուղում, մանկա-վարժի ընտանիքում: Ավարտել է Հայաստանի Ֆիզիկական կուլտուրայի և սպորտի պետական ինստիտուտը:

1978 թվականին ընկերոջ նախաձեռնությամբ այցելում է Երևանի Ավետարանական Մկրտական եկեղեցի, որտեղ հիմք է դրվում նրա հոգևոր կյանքին ու գործունեությանը:

Ապաշխարելով և Հիսուսին ընդունելով՝ 1978 թվականին որոշում է ամբողջ կյանքը նվիրել Քրիստոսին և մարդկանց հասցնել փրկության Ավետարանի Բարի Լուրը:

1982 թվականին ամուսնանում է նույն եկեղեցու ծառայող Անուշ Վարդանյանի հետ:

1988 թվականի երկրաշարժից հետո օգնության նպատակով, եկեղեցու համաձայնությամբ, տեղափոխվում է Հայ Ավետարանական Ընկերակցություն՝ իր ծառայությունը բերելու Հայաստանին աջակցող բարեգործական ծրագրերում:

Այդ ընթացքում ձևավորվում են նաև Սուրբ Գրքի սերտողության խմբեր, իսկ տարիների ընթացքում, կամաց-կամաց նաև հիմք է դրվում Հայաստանյայց Ավետարանական եկեղեցու գործունեությանը Հայաստանում, որի մեջ իր անգնա-հատելի լուծման է ներդրում նաև վեր. Կյուրեղյանը:

1994 թվականից նա իր ավանդին է ներդրում եկեղեցաշինության և վերակազմավորման գործում:

Նրա ծառայության ընթացքում կազմակերպվում են եկեղեցիներ՝ Երևանի տարբեր շրջաններում, Արովյանում, Գյումրիում և այլ վայրերում:

Նրա հոգևոր աճին մեծապես նպաստեց նաև 1997-2001 թվականներին Հայաստանի Ավետարանական Աստ-վաճաբանական ակադեմիայում ստացած ուսումը:

Այս ընթացքում՝ 2000 թվականի նոյեմբերի 26-ին, Հայաստանյայց Ավետարանական եկեղեցում առաջին անգամ տեղի է ունենում ձեռնադրության պաշտամունք, և Համլետ Կյուրեղյանը ձեռնադրվում է ու շարունակում իր ծառայությունը՝ քարոզելով, աշակերտելով և մկրտելով:

Տասներկու տարի ծառայելով ներկայիս Բաղրամյան 18-ում գտնվող Հայաստանյայց Ավետարանական եկեղեցում, ՀԱԵ հոգևոր խորհրդի առաջարկով և իր համաձայնությամբ տեղափոխվում է Գյումրու ՀԱԵ, ուր ծառայում է մինչև 2018 թվականը:

2018 թվականին ՀԱԵ խորհրդի որոշմամբ վերադառնում է Երևան՝ շարունակելով իր ծառայությունը որպես երեց հովիվ, ով իր շրջայցերով ու քարոզներով ծառայում է ՀԱԵ տեղական եկեղեցիներում: Կյանքի վերջին ամիսներին, ծանր հիվանդության պատճառով, կոչվում է հանգստի, ու վայելում ընտանիքի ընկերակցությունը մինչև 2021 թվականի հուլիսի 17-ը, երբ ննջում է ի Տեր:

Իր և տիկնոջ համատեղ և սիրով լի կյանքի ընթացքում ունեցել են երեք որդի և մեկ դուստր: Աստված օրհնել է նաև՝ պարգևելով վեց թոռ և մեկ թոռնուհի, իսկ երկրորդ թոռնուհին Տիրոջ կամքով շուտով լույս աշխարհ կգա:

Նա ապրեց 67 տարի ու միացավ Իր սիրելի, պաշտելի և 43 տարի քարոզած ՓՐԿՉԻՆ:☐

The AMAA Board of Directors and staff wish to extend their heartfelt condolences to the families of the following deceased friends.

* Shirley Arakelian
Shelby, NC

* Levon Bedrosian
Delmar, NY

* Marianne Bezjian
Fort Lauderdale, FL

* Sosse Bidanian
Clovis, CA

* Mary Elizabeth Collins
HoHoKus, NJ

* Siroon Davagian
Worcester, MA

* Anthony Di Giovanni
Ardmore, PA

* Jennie Diluccio
Berkeley Township, NJ

* Vahe Doudaklian
Fairfax, VA

* Elizabeth Gulezian
Centerville, MA

* Lynne Gulezian
Philadelphia, PA

Elaine Hamparson
Fresno, CA

* B. Edward Harver
Spring Valley, CA

* Armen Iknadosian
Pasadena, CA

* Harry Kavooagian
Brewster, MA

* Annette Ohnikian
Westwood, NJ

Gladys Peters
Fresno, CA

* Harout Shnorhokian
Maywood, NJ

* Leo Topjian
Westwood, MA

Savey Tufenkian
Glendale, CA

Arsen Hekimian

Arsen Hekimian of Canberra, NSW, Australia passed away peacefully in his sleep on May 24, 2021. He was 98.



Arsen was born on August 24, 1922, in Krikhan, a province in the previously known Armenian Cilicia, to an Evangelical family. His parents were Dr. Vahan and Kohar Hekimian and his siblings were Alice, Garbis, Aram and Hagop. He attended the local Evangelical Primary School, and continued his high school at Aleppo College, then known as the American College, as a boarding student.

Arsen's father died early in his life, in 1938. Around the same time, the Sandjak province, where more than 35,000 Armenians lived, was given to the Turkish Government. They were forced to leave everything and migrate to Syria and Lebanon. The Hekimian family settled in Aleppo, where they faced many more challenges, until the British Army entered Syria.

As a volunteer, Arsen enrolled in the British Army, and was accepted to serve in the Army until 1946, starting off as an Army Interpreter. During WWII he received the rank of Sergeant. After the war, Arsen worked at Iraqi Petroleum I.P.C. in Homs, Syria, where with his friends established the Homenetmen - Armenian General Athletic Union and Scouts.

On July 9, 1951, Arsen immigrated to Australia and resided in Sydney. On April 26, 1958, he married Rosine Darakjian and they were blessed with three children, Vahan, Herire and Zaven and four grandchildren, Dylon, Ruben, Aidan and Henry.

Working with some friends, Arsen played a key role in establishing the first Armenian Apostolic Church on Campbell Street, Surry Hills in the 1950s. In 1965, Arsen and his friends established Homenetmen Antranig Chapter where he served for nine years. Arsen was also active in the Armenian Evangelical Church of Sydney.

In 1974, he and his family moved to Canberra, where he lived the rest of his life, but frequently came to Sydney to keep close ties with the community and friends. He worked in Canberra as a real estate salesman and a salesman at David Jones before starting his own successful retail businesses. He retired in 1994. After his wife's Rosine's

death, his health declined rapidly, and he reluctantly agreed to move to the Uniting Mirinjani Aged care facility late in 2020.

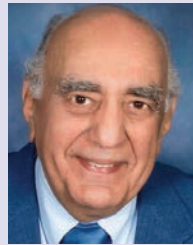
Arsen loved reading and gardening. He had humour, was the master of stories, a great man, a good man, a loving husband, father, grandfather and brother. He worried about everything that had to do with the Armenian community in Australia and elsewhere.

The funeral service was held on May 31 at the Armenian Evangelical Church of Sydney and was officiated by Rev. Dr. Krikor Youmshajekian at Arsen's request prior to his death.

Memorial donations were designated to the Armenian Missionary Association of Australia. □

Steve M. Krikorian

Steve M. Krikorian of Royal Oaks, MI, a long-time supporter of the AMAA's Child Sponsorship Program, passed away on June 7, 2021 at the age of 79.



Born January 25, 1942, Steve was the beloved husband of Doris and the loving brother of Krikor "George" (Ann) Krikorian, the late John and Elsie Krikorian and the late Lucy and Emmanuel Moshovos. He was the brother-in-law of Ray (Jean) Boujoulian. He was a member of the Knights of Vartan and will be missed by his nieces, nephews and friends.

Funeral services were held July 11, 2021 at the Armenian Congregational Church in Southfield, MI. A private burial service was held at the Glen Eden Cemetery, Livonia, MI.

Memorial donations may be made to the Armenian Missionary Association of America Child Sponsorship Program or to The Fuller Center for Housing in Armenia. □

Nina Mary Manougian

Nina Mary Manougian of Saddle River, NJ, passed away suddenly on May 6, 2021 in a traffic accident. She was 31.



Born and raised in Saddle River, she graduated from Ramsey High School and continued her

studies at the University of Vermont, Florence University of the Arts, and would have graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Rutgers University-Newark on May 16, 2021.

Nina was a prolific artist who worked with various media as well as a vocalist, acclaimed by faculty for possessing unmatched gifts and talent. She exemplified the desire to know and express oneself with rich and vivid authenticity, living with a sense of wonder at the world through vast interests in music, style and history. A voracious reader and lifelong learner, Nina was the ultimate conversationalist, having a deep and wide breadth of knowledge across various subjects. She was also trilingual and passionate about her Armenian-Italian heritage, creating a graphic short story about the life of her grandfather, an Armenian Genocide survivor, and studying art in Florence. In the last year, she greatly desired but was unable to travel to and serve those in need in the war-torn Armenian region of Artsakh, for which she had purchased a flag to fly in solidarity with. She was also an animal lover, particularly doting over the family dogs, enjoyed live music and concerts, and just about any venue that would channel creativity. In recent months, she had taken an interest in photography which she incorporated into her final projects at Rutgers.

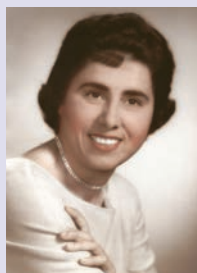
Nina is remembered by family and loved ones for her infectious warmth, compassion, sense of humor, selflessness, thrift, creativity, and thoughtful generosity. Tirelessly deliberate in her relationships with family and friends, she often crafted and gave gifts according to the most nuanced of loved ones' tastes and personalities. Nina's expressiveness had a subtle meekness and sense of humor: While she shied away from giving a speech at her sister's wedding, she toasted the happy couple with an Italian love song, having blessed the ceremony with the bride's favorite hymn, "It Is Well My Soul."

Nina is survived by her parents, Dr. Ara (a former AMAA Board member) and Dr. Toni Manougian; sister Ani, brother-in-law Marc Kiredjian, and nephew, Kapriel; maternal grandparents, Vincent and Theresa Falcone; as well as several aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

Memorial arrangements were made in private. In Nina's memory, donations can be made to AMAA's Sponsor a Child in Armenia/Artsakh Fund, a cause that was very close to Nina's heart. □

Mary Sarian

Mary Sarian of Los Angeles, CA passed away peacefully in her home on May 28, 2021 after a long and fulfilling life. She was 98.



Mary was born March 30, 1923 in Al-exandretta, just North of Aleppo, Syria. Her family included father, Rev. Nerses Sarian, mother, Noritza (Bardakjian), older brothers, Drs. Jirair Sarian and Norair Sarian, and younger sisters, Stella (Balikian) and Suzie (Phillips). Just weeks after her birth, her father moved the entire family to Damascus, where he had been called to pastor the Armenian Evangelical Church. The small congregation consisted mostly of destitute refugees from the Armenian Genocide, many of whom were living in UN camps and wearing relief clothing from the United States. They would frequently house guests from outside the city, and surprise overnight visits from strangers were natural to Mary and her family, as there were no telephones or electricity at the time.

Mary attended a Christian elementary school in Damascus and later boarding schools in Nebik, Syria, and Beirut, Lebanon, where she learned to speak Arabic, English and French. Mary then went to nursing school at American University of Beirut (AUB). Her family encouraged her to receive the highest education she could attain as a woman in the Middle East, empowering her with a career and economic opportunities.

Mary's last year of nursing school and the years after graduation were very difficult since both her mother and aunt died, leaving her with the responsibility of moving back to Damascus to take care of the home and raise her younger sisters. Despite this tragedy, the family persevered, with the older brothers financially supporting the family. Later, following her sibling's immigration to the United States, Mary and her father moved to the United States in 1953, marking a pivotal moment in her life. Upon arriving in Los Angeles, Mary launched her nursing career working at Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital and then Cedars Sinai Hospital. Later, while working at UCLA Hospital, Mary received a bachelor's degree in nursing from UCLA. Her persistence and

the value she placed on higher education were reflected in her ability to take classes before noon at UCLA followed by work from 3-11 pm. This was a very busy yet rewarding time for Mary.

After Mary received her bachelor's degree, she obtained public health and school nurse certifications, and worked 27 years as a school nurse for the Los Angeles Unified School District. During her career as a public health nurse, the five languages she learned growing up proved useful as she took care of immigrants from around the world and learned a new language, Spanish. Mary's career was very fulfilling to her, as she was able to counsel children and help them remain healthy.

Christianity was an integral part of Mary's life. She was deeply involved in her church and Sunday school and used her compassion and love for others throughout her career. She felt blessed by God and always tried to give back to the community and charity whenever possible.

Having never married, Mary's immediate and extended family was very important to her, and they included her in all aspects of their lives. Mary was especially close to her sister, Suzie Phillips, and her three sons, Albert, Gary (an AMAA Board member), and George Jr., as well as her other nephews and nieces, all of whom she considered to be her adopted children. Through the sharing of life stories and wisdom, Mary instilled in them morals, values and appreciation for the Bible and its truth.

Toward the end of her life, Mary expressed her heartfelt conviction that she had "ran the race" known as life and completed all the goals she set out to achieve. These goals included living a Godly life, being independent and not being a burden to anybody, attaining the highest education she possibly could, and pursuing a satisfying career. Mary felt satisfaction from being able to help others grow physically healthy and spiritually mature, in all walks of her life, from her own extended family to the members of her church, and to the children she cared for as a school nurse for 27 years.

A memorial service was held on June 23, at the United Armenian Congregational Church of Los Angeles, CA. Donations in lieu of flowers were designated for Camp Arev. □

Jack Sheen, M.D.

Dr. Jack Sheen of Santa Barbara, CA, preeminent Plastic and Reconstructive surgeon, died April 19, 2021, at the age of 96.



Internationally recognized for his original contributions to plastic surgery, he was regarded as a seminal figure in developing the art and technique of nasal surgery. He introduced aesthetic concepts and innovative techniques which transformed what had been primarily an unrefined reductive procedure into an artful and technically agile operation. He approached the surgery in a precise and nuanced way, focusing more on balance, harmony and aesthetic details than on size alone.

Besides his reputation as a respected teacher, Jack was renowned as an adept and masterful surgeon. His surgical technique was fast and fluid, with never a wasted or tentative move. This was attested to by the many surgeons who came from all over the world to observe in his operating room.

Jack began his practice in general Plastic and Reconstructive surgery in 1964, performing the full gamut of reconstructive procedures, but gradually limited his practice to his passion, nasal surgery, and eventually, to the most challenging cases. Most of his patients were doctor referred, frequently as a last resort.

In addition to many peer-reviewed articles, Jack, with his wife, Anitra, wrote a definitive text on nasal surgery, published in 1977. This was expanded to a two-volume 2nd Edition in 1987. Remarkable for a medical book, it is still in print.

In 1981, he was appointed as Associate Clinical Professor of Surgery, Division of Plastic Surgery at UCLA. He received an added appointment as Clinical Professor of Surgery, Section of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at USC in 1988. Among numerous awards and honors, he received the Distinguished Service Award, the highest honor presented by the Plastic Surgery Educational Foundation in 1997, Outstanding Service and Contribution Award, given by The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery in 2000, and The Distinguished Fellow Award by the prestigious American Association of Plastic Surgeons in 2002. Having practiced in Los Angeles for 29 years, Jack moved to Santa Barbara in 1993 and enjoyed a busy practice

there until 2003. In retirement he took up portrait sculpture as a hobby and at the age of 89, "shot his age" in golf.

The son of Armenian refugees from the Turkish Genocide, Jack grew up in Altadena, CA, joined the US Navy in 1943 and was assigned to a troop carrier in the South Pacific. A little-known fact about Jack Sheen is that, at the age of 17, he could type almost 100 words per minute on a manual typewriter. This skill enabled him to spend the war in a bunk next to the Commander, transmitting and receiving vital communications in Morse code.

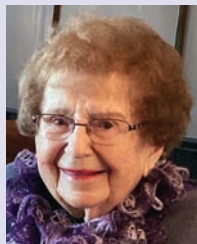
In 1951, he graduated from Stanford University and continued at Stanford University School of Medicine, graduating in 1955. Following an unclear path, he completed a year of OB-GYN residency and three years of general practice before completing Plastic Surgery training in 1964 at Cook County Hospital, Chicago.

Jack will be missed for his warm personality, sense of humor and generous spirit.

He is survived by his wife Anitra, sons Matthew and Michael Sheen, daughter Joan Sheen Welch, and granddaughters Caroline and Carlie Sheen and Sarah Welch. □

Gladys Shegoian

Gladys Manoogian Shegoian of San Francisco, CA passed away on May 19, 2021 at the age of 100 years and 3 months. It was an honor for the Shegoian family to have a matriarch who lived a Christian life for 10 decades.



Born in Fresno, CA to immigrant parents, Gladys was a first generation Armenian American. Growing up in Fresno was tough during the 1920s. Gladys' father, Paul C. Manoogian, had to give up his farm. Her mother, Araxie, died the same year in 1924. Being unable to take care of his daughter, Paul sent Gladys to live with her aunt who had two granddaughters her age. At age 6, Gladys moved to Parlier, CA to live with another aunt and attend school. But her biggest disappointment was that at school no one spoke Armenian.

When she was in the third grade, her father was able to take care of her and she went to live with him in Fresno. One of her

greatest childhood joys was when her father surprised her at Christmas with a piano which still sits in her home in San Francisco!

Gladys' entire education, from grade school to college, occurred in Fresno. Her father made a special point for Gladys to attend Sunday school. At Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, Gladys began her life long relationship with the Lord.

Gladys' first jobs always involved book-keeping. When World War II broke out, candy was in short supply. She helped her father start his "Raisnut" company. They sold Fresno raisins mixed with Spanish peanuts which was the predecessor to trail mix. It was a profitable enterprise.

In 1948 a new chapter began to unfold in Gladys' life when she moved to San Francisco. She had met Ardson Shegoian by the introduction of Badveli Nichan Hachian. This was the beginning of a love affair that would last over six decades. Gladys and Ardson were married at Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church in 1950. They established their family which included Ardson's mother Zaroohy in San Francisco. Sherry and Jim were born and the family was complete.

Gladys' philanthropy and Christian faith were inspired by her father. From establishing schools in Tripoli, Lebanon to being an active member in the AMAA and AGBU, her father set a high standard of love, compassion and conviction in the Christian faith that Gladys would be well known for. She took on the responsibility of being the Northern California Representative to the AMAA, Treasurer of the AGBU and Secretary to the Armenian Theological Student Aid. She was also a past Matron of the Daughters of Vartan and the first woman deacon in Calvary Armenian Congregational Church's history. Using her years of experience as a bookkeeper, Gladys provided Calvary Church with invaluable service as Treasurer to many of the church's needs.

She was everyone's mother, friend and confidant and loved people. If you needed to get something done, you asked Gladys how to do it. Her vast knowledge included knowing who everyone was, and how they were related. She was a blessing for the Shegoian family and everyone who knew her.

Gladys is survived by her daughter Sharlyn Shegoian and husband Carlos, her son James Shegoian and wife Victoria,

grandsons Anthony and Andrew Arroyo, grandsons Michael and Matthew Vieira and 5 great grandchildren. She was predeceased by her husband Ardson in 2013. The funeral service was held on May 28, in Kingsburg, CA.

Gladys' life was a testimony of Christian life that taught her family and friends much. □

Sona A. Yerganian

Sona A. (Arzomanian) Yerganian of West Roxbury, MA went peacefully to her eternal rest at the age of 96 on May 5, 2021, comfortably in her home and surrounded by her family.

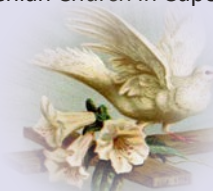


Born at Hart Hospital in Boston, MA Sona was the only child of Asadour and Zumroohie (Moskofian) Arzomanian. She grew up in Roslindale, then moved to West Roxbury in 1945, where she raised her family.

Sona was devoted to her loving husband for 69 years, Dr. George Yerganian, who preceded her in death two years ago. After graduating from the New England Conservatory, she became an accomplished concert pianist. Sona met George when he attended her performance at the International Institute. They were engaged a month later on Valentine's Day.

She was a lifelong member of the Armenian Women's Welfare Association, and contributed to music, arts and spiritual communities. Sona had an abundance of love to give, and would say, "To love children is the most rewarding thing a person can do." She said her greatest achievement was raising her children, treasuring her "cherubs" Athena Yerganian of Boston and Arra Yerganian and his wife Taline of San Jose, CA. She was the proud Nana to her grandchildren Alec, Talar and Shant.

Donations may be made to the Armenia Missionary Association of America or St. Andrew Armenian Church in Cupertino, CA. □





OFFICIAL CALL

**TO THE 102nd ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
ARMENIAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA**

OCT. 21-24, 2021

**Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church
FRESNO, CA**

The 102nd Annual Meeting of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) will be held on Saturday, October 23, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. (PT) at the Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, 3673 N First St, Fresno, CA 93726. All members of the AMAA are invited to attend the Meeting to:

1. Consider and approve the reports of the Officers, Committees, Chapters and Affiliated Boards of the Association for the fiscal year 2020-2021;
2. Review the financial reports for the fiscal year 2020-2021;
3. Announce the names of the newly elected Board members;
4. Elect members to the Nominating Committee;
5. Elect an Auditor; and
6. Consider and address any other business that may come before the membership.

Scan here →
to make your reservation



Thursday, October 21 - Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, Fresno, CA

- 6:00pm Dinner
- 7:00pm AEWC Meeting

Friday, October 22 - Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, Fresno, CA

- 9:30am Armenian Evangelical World Council Meeting
- 12:00pm Lunch
- 6:00pm Dinner
- 7:00pm AMAA Board of Directors' Meeting

Saturday, October 23 - Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, Fresno, CA

- 9:00am 102nd AMAA Annual Meeting
- 12:30pm Lunch
- 1:30pm AMAA Board Meeting (Short Session)
- 2:00-4:30 pm (TBD) Tour to Historical sites in Fresno

Saturday, October 23 - First Armenian Presbyterian Church, Fresno, CA

- 6:30pm Reception
- 7:00pm Banquet

Sunday, October 24 - Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, Fresno, CA

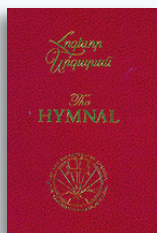
- 10:30am Worship Service and installation of AMAA Officers
- 12:00pm Light Lunch

AMAA will adhere to CDC and local guidelines regarding COVID-19 during all activities, meetings and gatherings.

AMAA Bookstore - Featured Books



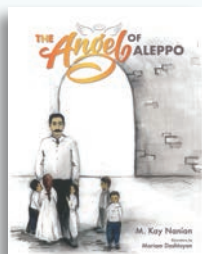
Armenian English Diglot New Testament
Western Armenian and Today's English version.
Item # 508 - Price: \$15.00



The Hymnal (Hokevor Yerkaran)
Հոգևոր Երգարան
Bilingual Hymns
Item # 353 - Price: \$30.00



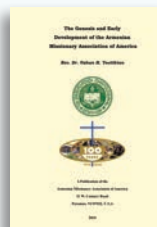
History of the Armenian Evangelical Churches of North and South America
History of AEUNA churches, their founders, locations, pastors, leaders, and programs.
Published by AEUNA
Item # 401CO - Price: \$10.00



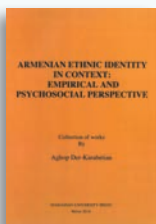
Angel of Aleppo
The story of Reverend Hovhannes Eskijian, who risked his life to save children in Aleppo, Syria during the Armenian Genocide of 1915. By **M. Kay Nanian**
Illustrations by **Mariam Dashtoyan**
Item # 410 - Price: \$10.00



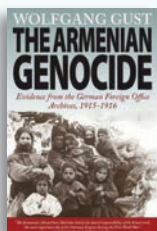
A History of Armenian Christianity (Second Printing)
A fairly objective overview of the Christian pilgrimage of the Armenian people throughout the centuries.
By **Leon Arpee**
Item # 366 - Price: \$25.00



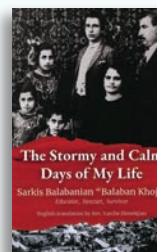
The Genesis and Early Development of the Armenian Missionary Association of America
History of the founding of the AMAA.
By **Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian**
Item # 403 - Price: \$20.00



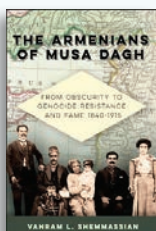
Armenian Ethnic Identity in Context: Empirical and Psychosocial Perspective
Collection of Works
By **Aghop Der-Karabetian**
Item # 404CO-HU
Price: \$20.00
All proceeds will go to Haigazian University.



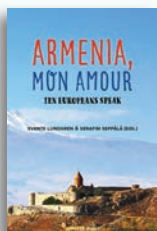
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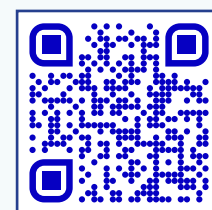


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